# RED STAR IN SAMARKAND

ANNA LOUISE STRONG

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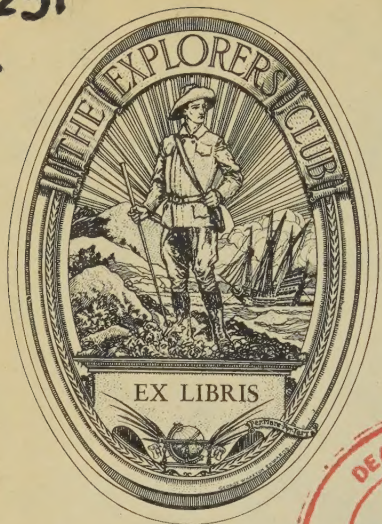


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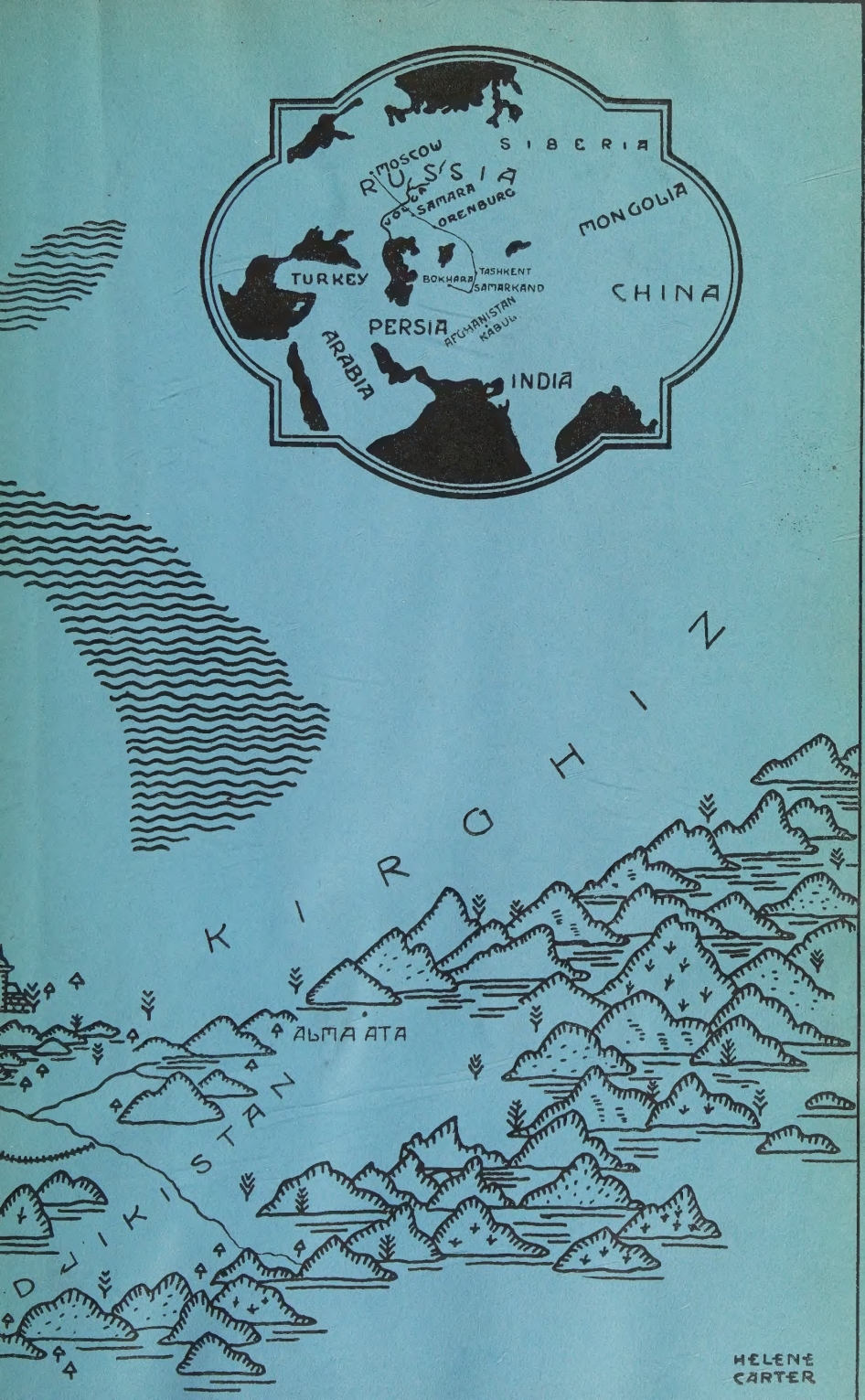
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HELENE CARTER

*Red Star in Samarkand, by Anna Louise Strong. Coward, McCann.* $3.50. New Masses Dec 1929

Anna Louise Strong can always be counted on to come out of Russia with a whole bagful of facts and figures and lively tales. Most tireless of information gatherers and dispensers, she has spent the better part of the past eight years in the Soviet Union. She has travelled everywhere, seen everything, talked to almost everyone worth talking to. And she has done a great piece of work in getting facts about Russia before the American people.

This time Miss Strong has gone down into Central Asia, visiting Tashkent, Samarkand and Bokhara. She describes the wise Soviet policy of exalting the natives, giving them political and cultural independence they have never known before, and at the same time waging a pitiless war against ancient customs, particularly the degradation of women under Mohammedan law. She tells of the great efforts the Soviet Government is making to develop local industry, instead of draining the rich Asian lands of all their raw materials to feed European Russia, leaving the local population stagnant and impoverished, as the Tsar did. She tells of great engineering projects to irrigate the fields where cotton, the "white gold" of Central Asia grows, the spectacular reestablishment and expansion of the cotton industry, its vast experimental and seed stations, the modern communities springing up around them. She tells too of the fight for Soviet power still going on, based on the new landed class of former farm laborers in the villages, and of industrial proletariat in the towns. And into this solid fabric she weaves picturesque legends of the Emir's fall and flight and how Ibrahim the horse thief led the Holy War that followed, quaint tales of how a sheep became the President of a village Soviet, ugly tales of murders that have accompanied the right to free women from polygamy, child marriage and complete slavery.

Most thrilling of all is her account of the mass unveiling in Holy Bokhara, when in a frenzy of enthusiasm that lasted for days, thousands of women tore the veils from their faces, and set fire to them in great piles.

In the last chapter is the story of a silk factory which with its modern buildings, its day nursery, its cinema and decent working conditions has become a symbol of freedom and sociability to the women of Bokhara. And the girls of the Ferghana silk mills have written a love song to their factory:

*"When I go home,*
*The roar of the factory is in me;*
*It gives me rhythm,*
*It gives me energy;*
*What am I doing here at home?*

*"At the blowing of the second whistle,*
*If I am sitting by the waters*
*Or before the mountains,*
*None the less I will leap up!*
*I shall be found at my post of duty*
*At the blowing of the second whistle."*

*JESSICA SMITH.*

## *Red Star in Samarkand*

Here is a story of the heart of Asia in which the romance that was Tamerlane, and the glory that was Alexander stand aside for the sheer adventure of modern life in ancient Samarkand and in Tashkent. Geography is really the hero of the plot; things happen in Central Asia because all the roads old and new lead that way. Miss Strong misses nothing; uproarious tales of modern ideas not quite digested in the veiled harems of the East; the lustre of the old tiles in palace and mosque; the remnants of imperial conquest by the Russian Czars; the brooding ever present possibilities of Russian-British clash in Asia. She stars her account with little stories, picked up here and there, old fables and modern anecdotes. She met hundreds of people—young girls, old priests, rogues and politicians, dreamers, and American tourists. She sees the country with her own penetrating gaze, and with the eyes of many another fellow traveller.

The fertile cotton lands and vineyards of Central Asia are background for a new sort of Arabian Nights, a new sort of news from far places. Journalism like Anna Louise Strong's is current history of the liveliest sort.

$3.50

*Author of*

CHINA'S MILLIONS

FIRST TIME IN HISTORY

*Red Star in Samarkand*, by Anna Louise Strong. Coward, McCann. $3.50

While the embattled crusaders are slinging their vehement foolishness, pro and con, about Soviet Russia, trying in their high-powered way to make us accept the Russians either as so many unwashed devils or as simon-pure angels, it is a relief to find a book like this. Miss Strong took her keen powers of observation and her sense of humor on a jaunt through what was once Russian Turkestan. She obtained a new view of the old struggle between the East and the West, of a civilization that seems hard and materialistic, impinging on the ancient, sleepy garden spots that surrounded Samarkand. The success of the Russians here, however, gives the lie to the idea that they are entirely hard and materialistic. Miss Strong shows us the human being beneath the gruff and efficient exterior of the surgeon.

And that same success may well be watched with some care by the serious-minded who read between the lines. The vast changes taking place in the East today can be regarded as a struggle between three major parties, Russia, England and the Easterners themselves who are so often forgotten. Miss Strong does not forget them, and her book is a fit companion piece to Upton Close's single-handed tilts against the British empire.—EARL HANSON Explorers Journal ~~Jan-Mar~~ 1930

Oct - Dec 1930 issue.

# Where Camels Meet Airplanes

Herald-Tribune Dec 1929

## THE RED STAR OF SAMARKAND.

By Anna Louise Strong . . . *New York: Coward-McCann . . . $3.50.*

Reviewed by
REBECCA DRUCKER

THE Golden Road to Samarkand is not a poet's fancy but the local name for the caravan route from Persia to Samarkand. There really are such places as Tashkent and Bokhara; they lie in the central Asiatic part of Russia and their mountains drive a wedge into Persia, India and China. To the Bolsheviks, as to the czars, this semi-mythical country is of vast importance. It is now the outpost of revolution as it was once the outpost of empire, and since the Bolshevik revolution looks east rather than west, it is even more jealously guarded by them than it was by the czars.

But to Miss Strong, who engaged herself as a delegate from a woman's organization to a conference of Eastern Asian women, and to the young Chicagoan steam shovel expert who was her chance traveling companion, the way was made easy and a visa granted. For these two chance Americans represented the two methods by which the Bolsheviks hope to complete the revolutionizing of Central Asia. The mechanization of the land and the woman's movement are the strongest forces in their program.

How the Bolsheviks have succeeded in welding to Moscow this country which the czars held with strong military garrisons, its wealth given over to concessionaires and adventurers, is a revelation of the resourcefulness of Bolshevik policy. They have broken up the military province of Turkestan into several republics by granting tribal autonomy to the Uzbeks, the Turcomans, the Tadjiks, the Kirghiz, the Kazaks and other nationalities. Useless in this land of nomadic desert and hill tribes to speak of Karl Marx, useless in this land of primitive agriculture to speak of the proletarian revolt. But the revolution progresses, by the division of land, by vast communal irrigation and trading projects, most of all by unceasing warfare on ancient taboos.

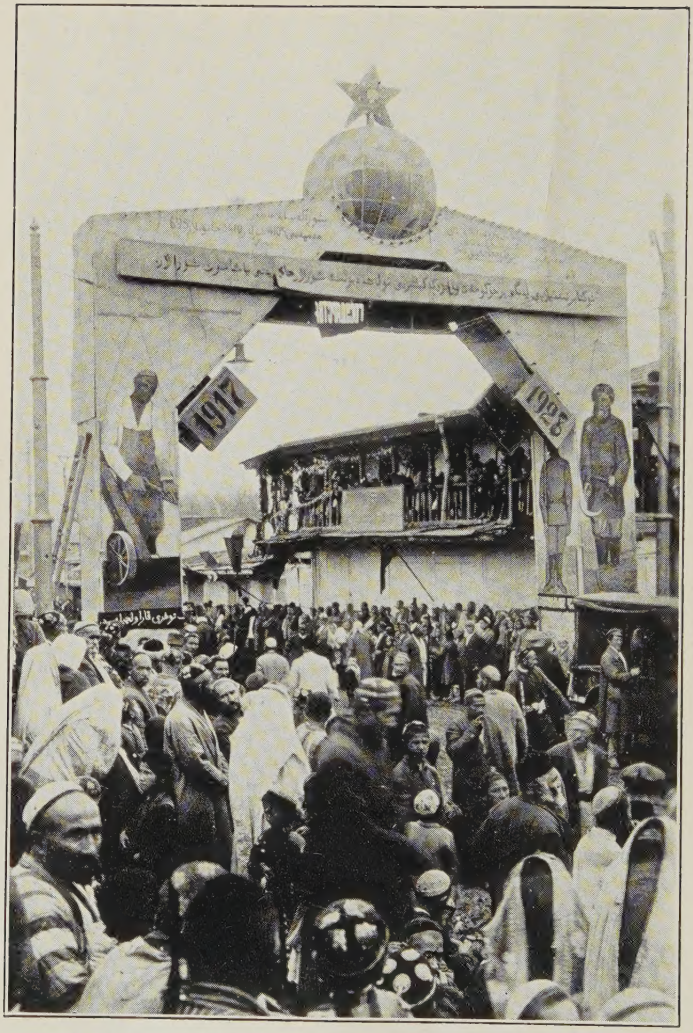
Miss Strong's observations are not of the embalmed romance of that region but of the new life that is breaking through the age-long cocoon.

Here in Bolshevik Central Asia impact with the West has not left a litter of flat tires and Standard Oil tins, but has resulted in a reshaping of communal interests. These communal interests are still overwhelmingly dominated by the fanatic Moslem priests and the expropriated lords of the land, who turn up agilely as village Soviet presidents and judges. But a vast ferment is at work. The Bolsheviks have set a kind of time fuse and wait until the 97 per cent illiteracy of the region is dissolved.

More potent even than the machine, the steam tractor, the radio and the aeroplane, to break the inertia of the land, is the effort to free women. This emergence of woman in Central Asia from behind the hideous black parabja, the horsehair veil which swaths her from head to waist, is more revolutionary than the division of the land, and carries with it a more stirring train of consequences. Many tribes which have swallowed the economic program rise to massacre the woman who unveils. For with the veil go many institutions sanctioned by the Koran—child marriage, polygamy, the sale of girls in marriage, and unlimited child-bearing.

It is a land of vast incongruities. The airplane cuts to two hours a two-week journey across the desert but at the end of the airplane route is only the camel caravan. Under the tomb of Tamerlaine rises the six-room cottage of the farm-laborer president of the Uzbeks. One finds here the veiled woman and the birth control clinic. The most ancient taboos and the most modern iconoclasm jostle each other.

Miss Strong has observed all the aspects of this world with vivacity, humor and a strong appreciation of human values. She is a reporter, with all an American's relish of the individual instance and the specific occurrence. Yet she sees the spectacle as a whole.




*Arch Erected in the Native City of Tashkent on a Revolutionary Holiday*

# RED STAR IN SAMARKAND

by

ANNA LOUISE STRONG

EXPLORERS
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*The Iron Road*
*to Turkestan*

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## CHAPTER ONE

THERE are many roads to Samarkand in the heart of Asia. All of them have made history. There is the Golden Road from the trading bazaars of Persia, so-called with Eastern courtesy because of the sun-struck yellow sands it crosses. There is the Great Road, and the Small Road, and the Winding Way, names more matter-of-fact given by caravans from China. There is even a rather uncertain new airplane route from Kabul, connecting spasmodically two Asian capitals, each aloof and mysterious to the outer world. Most direct of all is the Iron Road of rails five days southeast from Moscow.

Along this road came the Russian conquest, pushing south in the seventies of last century towards the fertile cotton lands and vineyards of Central Asia—beyond which lie the mountains of the Afghans and British India. The unrest thus aroused between two world empires is not yet ended; it grows with the decades. But many other conquerors had come be-

fore them, over the Golden Road or the Great Road or some of the other routes traversing the deserts. Alexander of Macedonia was the first recorded conqueror of Samarkand the Ancient; his great eastward swing through Asia took him even to the borders of India. Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, the Uzbeks of the northern steppe have all in turn descended upon her richness, drawn to her across a thousand miles of desert sun.

There is a reason for all these conquests, a reason why Samarkand gleams like a magic jewel, enticing the hearts of kings. One day in the Kremlin, discussing the ever-recurring struggles of history, Karl Radek said to me: "Social and economic forces change, but geography remains." It is the geography of Samarkand that has fixed her destiny. Here, at the foot of the highest mountain massifs of earth lie fertile irrigated regions, encircled by the great deserts of Central Asia. Always since the dawn of history there have been settled civilizations here in the rich, watered soil. Always about them in the plains have roamed the nomads, bred to wandering and to battle, gazing with envious eyes at the fat crops by the rivers. Those

crops were worthy of their envy. In recent years even American irrigation experts have made pilgrimages thither, to learn what secret chemistry of soil and water has made it possible for irrigation to go on for centuries without exhausting fertility, whereas in parts of Colorado thirty-five years of irrigation brings impoverishment. They found that certain chemicals in the rivers, drawn from mineral beds in the mountains, kept the earth sweet indefinitely. Such are the treasure soils in the heart of Asia, drawing and absorbing race after race of conquerors, until each in its turn grew placid and was conquered again by the ever-fresh hordes of the plains.

Under the Russian czar the province of Turkestan was known as the "brightest jewel in the crown of empire." But the glory was taken from Samarkand. A new Russian city of Tashkent, built with wide boulevards to house the conquerors, took its place as the capital. A governor's mansion of white marble and a lofty Russian cathedral faced each other across a military parade ground. Scattered Russian settlers came along the new Iron Road of rails and bullets to dominate the land. They brought with

them their own culture, doctors, schools for their children, and eventually a small number of schools in the Russian language for the Russification of a few chosen natives, in order that their government might have clerks and go-betweens.

Great and hectic were the fortunes made in cotton lands by Russian officers attached to that first invasion. Giddy speculation surged over the humble native cotton-grower, who created riches he might not share. Nor might other foreign capitalists participate easily. Permits to enter Turkestan were hard to come by, a tradition which has survived to modern Soviet days. For this was an outpost of empire on the road to India.

Behind all Asiatic politics is the age-long struggle of Britain and Russia for the control of Asia. Between the two empires runs across the continent a wavering line of ancient peoples—Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Thibet, Mongolia, China. All of these Asian nations under the impact of the modern industrial west, know that their ancient world must adapt itself or perish. They play the Russians against the British, and try to escape domination by either. As Russian Turkestan was the czar's armed stronghold

among these nations, so Soviet Central Asia is the outpost of Bolshevik propaganda and influence, the experiment station of communism in Asia.

In the vast hinterland beyond the railways of the Russian settlers, live a variety of native peoples, deposited by successive waves of invasion, speaking different languages, with cultures of their own which, devoid of sanitation or general literacy, yet produced irrigation, cotton growing, famous vineyards, fine weaving and embroidery, rug-making, architecture of some magnificence and many kindred arts. All are Mohammedans, with the usual social system of the Moslems; women veiled and keeping to the women's quarters, court procedure based on the Koran interpreted by mullahs, schools devoted to reciting the Moslem scriptures. Most cultured of these races is the Tadjik, of Iranian origin, original inhabitants of the land but pushed by successive invasions into the hungry mountains or the trading bazaars of cities, where they still cherish traditions of fine poetry and music. Strongest of all are the Uzbeks, known also as Sarts, a term they regard as insult. For the Sarts, though cousins of the Uzbeks, were settled people and as such forever in-

ferior to the barbaric conquerors of the plains. The Uzbeks also have become a settled race of cotton-growers, but have not forgotten their pride of nomad origin. For as in the days of chivalry in Europe, so also in Central Asia, the roving conquerors, living by plunder, had more prestige than the humble, exploited peasant.

All of these races alike were submerged by the czardom. The Russian invasion, making itself comfortable along the railways, took no thought for the lives and traditions of these ancient peoples, sent them no doctors, gave them no schools in their own language, though it educated a few of their brighter youth in the language of the conquerors. Meantime they meddled not at all with customs or religion, with veiling of women or marriage by purchase; they left the local dominance of landlord and clergy unaltered. They contented themselves with sufficient control of police, army and transport to enable them to exploit the land and drain its riches. In all this, they followed the traditions of European conquest of backward nations.

The Bolshevik policy in Central Asia is daringly different. On the one hand they exalt the natives, placing them at once in all possible posts of govern-

ment. Russians mix with Uzbeks, Turcomans, Tadjiks—easily and without flaunting superiority. At the same time they attack without compromise the ancient customs, they give women equal rights with men and forbid child marriage; they send sanitary stations into the villages. Instead of allying themselves with the native princes and clergy, they dethrone and expel these potentates. They confiscate the lands of the rich and divide them among the tenants. They expect to base their own continued rule, not on the prestige of the European, but on the gratitude and material interest of the farmhand.

Not easily does the Soviet Government permit foreigners to visit its experiment station in communizing Central Asians. Press correspondents, especially, have difficulties; for five years past, I was told, none has been granted the permit needed. Yet engineers needed for consultation on irrigation, or other foreigners invited by Russian organizations, have little trouble. After some planning, I managed to secure an invitation from a women's organization to attend in Tashkent a conference of Central Asian women. With this I approached the Foreign

Office in Moscow, and succeeded, after the usual anxious waiting, in securing my visa.

It was not a visa to Turkestan. There is no longer, under Soviet rule, any such place as Turkestan. That former province, with some adjacent states, has been recarved according to nationality into a series of small republics. Uzbekistan, the most important, includes most of the irrigated lands and the famous cities: Samarkand, Bokhara, Tashkent, and Fergana. Glory has come again to Samarkand; she is again a capital; in her sits the government of the Uzbeks. To the west of Samarkand, between her and the Caspian, lies the great desert republic of the nomad Turcomans. These two republics, of Uzbeks and Turcomans, are constituent republics of the Soviet Union, on a technical equality with the Russian or the Ukrainian Republics. Their presidents sit among the six presiding officers in the congress of the Soviet Union. That such disproportionate prestige should be given to such tiny nations, indicates their strategic importance as centers of Soviet influence in Asia. Besides these two major republics are several lesser ones—the Kirghiz, the Tadjiks, the Kazaks, represented in the Soviet Federation indirectly, as parts of larger groupings.

To such a new experiment in native rule, I was bound, by the Iron Road from Moscow.

The fast train to Samarkand runs four times weekly [1] from Moscow, making two thousand miles to Tashkent in slightly more than four days and reaching Samarkand twelve hours later. It cannot be said to be an express, it halts and wanders again across the plains and deserts; but it is cheap and comfortable. Thirty-seven [1] dollars covered my fare to Tashkent in a first-class sleeping compartment, with restful lounge and chair and table, and adjoining lavatory. The compartment was for two; and, by the chance of Russian casualness which lumps men and women together in railway carriages, I had a man as my companion. An American business man—much to my surprise, for I had flattered myself that I was the only American with a permit for Central Asia.

He did not even know, I learned, that his trip to Tashkent was by any special favor. He had seen none of the harassing red tape which afflicts every transaction in Moscow, and which has many causes —the left-over bureaucracy of czardom, the rapidly grown bureaucracy of a socialist state managing all

[1] Nine months later: Already two trains daily; fare reduced to $32. Central Asia expands rapidly.

at once a hundred new kinds of unaccustomed industry, mutual suspicions requiring constant checks, and other concrete causes for concrete cases. All this red tape had been neatly unwound for him without his knowledge by the office staff of Amtorg (the Soviet trading organization in America), which desired him to visit the irrigated regions. For he was Service Manager of a machinery company in Chicago, which had sold steam-shovels and dredges to the Soviet Government. Some of these were working badly; the firm claimed that the Russians did not know how to install them. On the results of his trip hung several million dollars' worth of business for another year.

The tale of his visit to Russia, told to me in the days of our journey, was entertaining and illuminating. Youthful, naïve, knowing dredges thoroughly and European politics not at all, he had been frightened at first by the rumors current in Germany. A friend of his family begged him "for his wife's sake" not to venture. However, the Danes, whom he met on a visit to his mother near Copenhagen, were more optimistic; he learned that Denmark was supplying dairy machinery in large quantities to the Soviet

Union and that numbers of Danes were living there, installing and inspecting it. As he came through Poland, the tense military atmosphere worried him and he regretted his trip; these worries continued till he reached Moscow. There he secured a comfortable room with bath, and the "Amtorg boys" showed him the city, bought tickets for the ballet, and took him also to see the "Krassin movie" where the famous polar rescues were shown on the screen. I do not know to what extent such technique is customary in Europe, but Russia and America met on this basis and the young Chicagoan decided that "Russians are very fine folks to do business with."

His only worry on the trip to ancient Turkestan was the slowness of the train, which wound through farms and villages and across high desolate steppes at an average rate of hardly more than twenty miles an hour. He would never come this way again, he assured me. It took too long: five whole days out of Moscow. He wanted to get home for Christmas and wasn't sure if he would make it. He found the wild Kazaks of the plains mildly interesting, but not enough to make up for Chicago. Later in Tashkent he was interested in embroideries for his wife,

but not at all in the tremendous politics of Asia. In the end, however, he was really thrilled by the vast irrigation projects shown him, and by "the millions and millions and millions of dollars that those folks are going to have to put into dredges." He was glad he had come; and equally glad to hurry back to Chicago.

It is not surprising that the Russians like very much this normal type of young American business man, who knows his job thoroughly and wants to do it in a hurry in order to get back to his auto and radio set at home; and who knows nothing else and does not wish to interfere in anything else. He is much more agreeable to them than the usual European business man whose business has always some relation, even if indirect, to his patriotism and politics. The American raises no complications; he threatens no balance of power; it is quite safe to give him a visa to any part of Central Asia. Even his ignorance is an asset; he desires to reform nothing but dredges.

. . . . . .

For the first two days on the Iron Road, the lowering skies of Moscow autumn pursued us. We trav-

ersed the road to Samara which I had passed seven years ago at the beginning of the great famine. In that terrible time of collapse, the journey took ten days; we waited endlessly on sidetracks while the crew cut damp wood fuel or while the food and refugee trains crawled past us. Now we made Samara in thirty-two hours. Seven years ago ten thousand people were sleeping in its station, hungry and shelterless, trying to flee from doom by a single-track railway. Here on the tracks I had lived in a Food Train, seeing four thousand children gather each morning for their one daily meal. Here I had sickened of typhus and been removed to a near-by hospital. In this station, as winter drew on, naked frozen corpses had been stacked like wood in warehouses, awaiting spring to bring strength to bury them.

But now, only seven years after, as our train pulled into that same station, the passengers poured into a buffet loaded with all sorts and varieties of nourishment. We loaded up with newspapers and illustrated journals from the newsstand. Hundreds of peasants sat on benches waiting for trains which arrived on schedule. Life was normal again;

the vitality of a peasant people had mended the breaches made by famine and pestilence.

Only once I observed scars left by famine. At the station of Seezeran, where our train first touched the Volga, four grim, ragged urchins haunted the platform demanding money for bread. They were insistent; their tones seemed to threaten a seizure of purse if denied. I asked which needed bread the most, and they told me they were all together. A gift of ten kopeks was considered by them sufficient tribute, for thereafter they freely answered questions about their begging life. They admitted that there was a children's home in Seezeran, but said it was crowded and besides they didn't *want* to go there.

On the whole trip to Samarkand, across the former famine region, only one other child beggar approached me, and he ducked when I spoke of finding a place in a children's home. These are the stragglers of what a few years ago was a terrible wandering army, saved from death while their parents perished of hunger. Once they infested all Russian cities and railways in hordes. Year by year I have seen them diminish, into newly-opened children's homes, and lately by adoption into peasant

*Two Men of Kasakstan Waiting for a Train*

households. Some of the boys I knew, sole male survivors of families, have taken over their father's land and begun to farm it. Others have jobs in newly opening industries. Others are wastage, sunk below the surface into the criminal gangs of cities. In the town of Buzuluk, where once the Quakers supported many orphanages, there is only one left, serving as secondary school to the children's homes of the district. The rest have graduated their population into the farms and workshops.

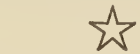
Beyond the Volga we came to the great plains of the Urals. On either side the train were continuous new fences built as snow-breaks—where seven years ago one of our relief workers was stalled for a week in a blizzard, while two men died of exhaustion trying to dig out the engine. Here and there, lines of young pine trees have even been planted, to serve some day as permanent barrier against the snow drifts.

On the third night we passed Orenburg, the old fortress town where for generations the Russians held the frontier of Europe against the tribes of the east. We woke, after the wet Russian skies, to a clear sunrise beyond the Urals. The sun-baked

plains of Kazakstan unrolled before us, largest in territory of all the autonomous republics in the Soviet Union, but inhabited chiefly by nomads. Here is a vast stretch of oil deposits, 85,000 square kilometers, only half prospected. At the stations appeared faces oddly reminiscent of Mongolia. Sometimes a galloping train of the local Kazaks, trekking towards distant pasture, waved at the engine or stood silently staring as we passed them. Sometimes a round felt tent, like the "yurt" of the Mongols, betrayed an encampment.

Hour after hour, the flat unfertile plains slipped past us. On the fourth night we passed the northern tip of the Aral Sea about midnight, and dawn found us still in the sands left by these slowly drying salt waters of what was once a much larger Caspian. Then again settlements, and thin lines of vegetation along the Syr Darya River, which runs from this point on to Tashkent. Camels harnessed to primitive carts drew up at the stations; beyond them great grazing lands of scant dry grass alternated with sandy wastes; the sun grew hotter. So we drew on to the irrigated lands of Central Asia.

*Tashkent*
*Takes Holiday*



## CHAPTER TWO

AFTER the gloomy skies of Russian autumn, after the desert and sparse steppe of the nomad Kazaks, Tashkent, to which we came on the fifth dawn by the Iron Road from Moscow, seemed a garden. It reminded me of China. The intensive culture of melons, vegetables, grapes, watered by ditches; the ragged walls of sun-baked earth separating tiny green plots; the leisurely dark-skinned natives in scant clothing, bending over the soil, unceasing, unhurrying—these things had nothing in common with the tall, sheep-skinned peasants of the wide Russian plains, but much in common with China. There were far more trees than in any part of China except Kansu—trees now flushing with autumn russet and yellow. More beasts of burden, too, horses, oxen, occasional camels. A novel type of cart appeared, high, light, with enormous wheels higher than a man, eminently suited to the heavy mud of irrigation districts, through which it rolls slowly but inexorably. A train of such carts passed

us, going out to work in early dawn; beyond them we came to the railway station.

Amazing was our first view of the streets in the New Town of Tashkent—the Russian section built during the final decades of last century for the new conquerors of Central Asia. They are magnificently wide—I paced one and found it one hundred and fifty feet from side to side, including two thirty-foot sidewalks. Two and sometimes four rows of lofty trees shaded them from the sun of the Central Asian summer. In other Russian towns such streets do occur occasionally, where an ancient wall has been taken down to make way for a boulevard. Here they were everywhere, crossing each other, giving a sense of spaciousness. They ended in many green squares: the City Park, now being festooned for the October celebrations; the great parade square between the former Governor General's mansion and the cathedral, once used only for military demonstrations under the twin symbols of civil and religious power. Here on the morrow would be the reviewing stand for the peoples of the East in procession.

Many new buildings were going up, surrounded

by the mud and débris of construction—the new Educational Institute of the Tadjik Republic, training primary teachers to carry literacy to the mountaineers in the Pamir; a new coöperative clothing factory; a new two-story building of concrete and glass "poured" in three months of the summer according to the "American method" was the pride of a young technician who met the American business man at the station. It belonged to the Cotton Trust and covered efficiently if not very beautifully an entire half-block.

My reveries on the beauty of Tashkent were somewhat rudely interrupted by the hotel to which I was taken—pretentious, utterly dingy and expensively uncomfortable. Its boasted water supply ran slowly out of clogged bowls, its boasted electric lights went out with frequency. It furnished one sheet and no towels and charged from five roubles a day and upwards. I escaped to the principal thoroughfare, now known as Karl Marx Avenue, which runs from the City Park to the former parade ground.

Flower merchants crowded the sidewalks, baskets of roses, asters, chrysanthemums, each presided over

by a swarthy son of Allah in turban or small plush cap. Under the trees at the spacious crossings were permanent booths of fruit and nuts and sweets. Enormous clusters of purple and golden grapes festooned their rafters, and mammoth apples and pears made decorations of red and yellow. There were plenty of almonds, very cheap, and large cakes of "halva," a confection of nuts, oil and honey. Other square booths announced themselves as "Pravda Vostoke Booth" No. 9, or 16, indicating that they were installed to sell the newspaper, "Truth of the East." These newsstands, in uniform design, were scattered from one end of Tashkent to the other and carry, besides their parent newspaper, twenty or more illustrated journals and supplies of paper, pencils, and envelopes. Often during holiday and Sunday closing of other stores, I bought my typewriter paper and envelopes there.

All the city was preparing for the holidays. Red streamers were entwined with merchandise in the shop windows; statuettes of Lenin were flanked by posters. In the City Park, around a central fountain, workmen were building a great red star, mingled with greens and electric lights, visible down

half a dozen thoroughfares which radiate from this center. At the entrance of the square a banner extended across the street called upon "All! All! All!" to attend the football match between Moscow and Tashkent to take place on the 4th, the 6th and the 8th in the Stadium of the KIM (Communist International of Youth). I turned to the left, up another broad, shaded street, and reached the Red Army Club, in one large hall of which was meeting the Women's Conference of Central Asia.

Here were the only people of Tashkent who knew no holidays, to whom October celebrations were merely so much duty—propaganda arrayed in colorful form for the parade-loving populace. The Women's Section of the Communist Party of Central Asia was considering the hard and bloody fight for women's freedom. Their sessions went on morning and evening; they turned aside for no frivolities. Down in the backward villages their members were being violated, tortured and murdered. The men, even Communist men, underrated their difficulties. They must prepare; they must organize; they must struggle.

Comrade Murateva, leader of the conference, is

of a type common to all lands and ages, estimable and never happy or comfortable—the woman born to reform the world. The first words I heard her speak, in conversation with a woman delegate, were typical: "This year we must take the *paranja* (the hideous veil worn by Uzbek women) and finish with it; this must be the historic year." If she had lived in America of last century, she would have smashed saloons with Carrie Nation; if she had lived in England, she would have wrestled with police for suffrage; being a modern Russian she had naturally joined the Communist Party, where her energy and earnestness had made her head of the Women's Section for Central Asia. As such she had an advantage over her American and English counterparts; she had a much wider variety of causes to fight and worry over, both because of the backwardness of the land and the complex perfection towards which she aimed.

To listen to her speech was to feel a depressing sense of the endless limitations of mankind. It was not merely veils on women's faces that we must finish with; it was drunkenness and sloth and graft and ignorance, and plain lack of interest on the part

of the young. "Are we getting any help from the Young Communists?" she asked rhetorically. "If we speak gently, we must say: 'Not very much.' If we speak truth, we must say: 'Not any at all.' " She denounced the "Kalym," or purchase-money for brides given by local custom; it was harder to detect since it had changed from payment in camels to payment in cash; it was no better than prostitution, yet Soviet Registration Bureaus in local villages actually condoned such marriages by registering them as legal. It was painfully clear, as I listened to Comrade Murateva's list of the evils in Central Asian villages, that to the end of her last fighting breath she would never have holiday.

Yet Tashkent took holiday in spite of her, with a stupendousness I have never seen in any holiday before. In the second hour of Murateva's speech I turned to the secretary of the meeting. "What time do the government offices close to-day?" I asked. She glanced at her watch. "It is after one o'clock. They are already closed. They will not open again for three and a half days."

Thus simply and without warning three and a half days holiday came down on the city. I had

arrived that morning; I had had no time to make acquaintances. What could I do with three and a half days in which all offices were closed? There was still an hour's time in which to reach the Trade Unions, which might yet be open. I hastened thither to get a list of clubs and celebrations. In the last few minutes before closing I secured a note from the Cultural Section of the Trade Unions, asking all workers' clubs to show me a good time. If for the coming days I could do nothing serious, I might, with this letter of introduction, see how Tashkent takes holiday.

The seriousness of a holiday in all its glory is unknown in our western lands. We are incapable perhaps of the ultimate leisure of the East; our tramway workers and restaurant waiters and newspaper reporters at least must uphold society by working. In Tashkent the tramways stopped; only on foot could I proceed to the demonstrations. The newspapers ceased; from Wednesday to Sunday morning the world's events were withheld from us. The larger restaurants closed that the waiters and cooks might have holiday; only a little Dairy Lunch near the hotel, run by the proprietor's family, stayed open

to reap a golden harvest. As I sat here in the afternoon, a rug-peddler entered, enticing me with glimpses of the ancient weaves of Merv. The waitress drove him out. "You can't sell here, and your kind of trade is forbidden anyway on holiday." Evidently, those who failed to appreciate the blessings of leisure had it enforced on them.

In contrast to festivals in any European land, the sale of spirits ceased on the afternoon before the celebrations began. Drunkenness must be avoided; holidays are not for dissipation! They are devoted to theaters, bands, processions, motion pictures, games, museums, and a dozen workers clubs with continuous entertainments. All of these, I found, were crowded to suffocation.

The formal center of the three days holiday was of course the anniversary celebration on the morning of November 7th. As early as eight o'clock the air throbbed with distant drums. The streets were sprinkled with groups of workers and clerks and women, wearing red rosettes or red kerchiefs, going in irregular formation to their station in the parade. Big auto-trucks rushed past, crowded with madly cheering children. From the balcony of the Labor

Temple, to which I had secured an entrance permit the previous afternoon, I watched the workers with their banners passing beneath the trees of Karl Marx Avenue. Transport workers, construction workers, office girls with red-crowned heads. Two comely Uzbek maidens marched proudly, with red plush caps on long black curls, each bearing a rifle, while a placard made it evident that the once-veiled women of the Uzbeks were now members of "shooting clubs" and taking prizes for marksmanship. Groups of Young Pioneers appeared, more bands, and the Friends of Aviation.

Rather commonplace after all, this parade in New Town. Similar to a thousand other parades that day occurring in every city and town of the Soviet Union. Over in Old Town, the native city, a more picturesque procession was forming. A friendly Russian whom I met on the balcony of the Labor Temple and who learned that I was a foreigner in Tashkent, offered with hospitable kindliness to take me there. No trams were running, and the way was long and muddy. Slipping, splashing, we came to the shore of the Syr Darya.

On the hard, beaten banks of a yellow, muddy

stream were the *Chai-Khannas*, or tea gardens. Sitting on little mats, or platforms, or on the solid clay, the old and middle-aged males of the Uzbek nation lounged at ease. For their entertainment, dreamy musicians thrummed monotonous stringed instruments; waiters bearing long pipes sold smokes in turn to customers; long bearded merchants at stands gravely carved slices of melon for purchasers who ate them drippingly in the streets. Lord of all the ceremonious morning was tea, sipped slowly and lovingly from flattish cups without handles. The consumer of tea, in these crowded yet leisurely spaces, where time was not and the hours slipped by even as the centuries, in placid contemplation of their own quiet emptiness—the consumer of tea was always male. Far away, from the roof-tops the women watched for the procession, or hurried along the narrow sidewalks like walking pillars, covered from head to foot by the hideous *paranjas*. Respectable women of the East have no part in public holiday.

At the entrance to Old Town, the native city of Tashkent, two streets converge, widened in recent years by the tramway, to thirty feet in contrast to

five times that width in New Town. A festal arch above one of these streets, crowned by the globe of the earth and a red star, gave promise that the procession would come that way. We went half a mile up this street to wait, under the walls of an ancient mosque, now housing a high school of the Coöperatives. Hundreds of spectators clung to its steps and parapets like hiving bees; thousands gazed from distant roofs. High in the air on a flat roof overlooking the street, waited the Uzbek musicians, with their pineapple-shaped drums, long horns, and *barabands*.

Down below at last came surging the procession. The people of the East were marching, Uzbeks from city and plain. Railroad workers and construction workers first, with conventional banners, tamed by long association with Russians. Following these the untamed *dekkans*, or peasants, bearded, high-booted, with long flapping coats, in form like dressing-gowns, of many colors. Here a group of men were dancing, throwing up arms and uttering wild shouts as they passed down the street. Horsemen came, in proud array, pushing against the slipping crowds of spectators. Turcomans arrived from the distant

desert, bearing aloft instead of a banner, a *yurt* of white felt, decorated in red, symbol of the nomad hordes from which they came.

Women also, Uzbek women, not only unveiled but parading their unveiling in public, where all might see that they were fighters for freedom. They huddled shyly together, drawing their long head-shawls close to their faces, avoiding the stares of the street. Who shall say through what family conflicts, what neighborhood scandal, each had passed before she thus dared celebrate her own personal revolution? Who shall say what interchange of thought passed between the veiled women on the house-tops and these unveiled ones in the streets, as they looked at the other?

Shyly or boldly, dancing or shrinking, shouting, marching, on foot and on horse, in small skull caps of red or blue or green or purple velvet, in flapping robes worn with age or shining with new hand-woven silk, the procession passed down the muddy street and under the great Red Star, under the round globe with words blazoned in Uzbek and Russian: "Workers of the World, Unite." Towards the last came children, Young Pioneers of the Uzbek na-

tion, in white or khaki shirts and red neckerchiefs.

Along the shores of the ancient Syr Darya River they passed, between the many *Chai-Khannas* where the old men of Asia sipped their tea—on, on, till they came to New Town, the Russian town, the town of the conquerors. Still on, to the formal square between the Russian church and the Governor General's mansion, now turned into a museum. They broke over this square; they trampled it—the square once reserved for military parades of the armed might of the czar. They carried the mud of Old Town over its grass and cleaner pavements. There in the receiving stand to welcome them stood the new rulers of party and city and trade unions.

Here was the formal end of the procession. But an hour later I saw horsemen of the plains ride tempestuously down Karl Marx Avenue, enticed thereto by the width of the street. The crowd of pedestrian Russians ran to get out of the way as they came galloping, shouting, laughing, jostling against each other as in the races of the great steppe. A man beside me muttered, "The wild men"; not all the Russians enjoyed this new freedom of the once subject races. I wondered, as I saw them exultingly

celebrating on this avenue built wide by their conquerors and now renamed for a dead German philosopher, what the doctrines of Karl Marx would do to these men of the plains and what these men of the plains would do to the doctrines of Marx. For they have been welded, for better or worse, in a strange marriage under the Red Star of the Soviet Union.

Both before and after the holiday procession, the afternoons and evenings were devoted to clubs and museums, football games and motion pictures. In spite of my introductory letter I found it difficult to enter many of these, not for lack of good will from the management, but because I could not get near the door for the crowds. Only those who came an hour early managed to enter; the rest were so jammed by demanding mobs about the entrances that it was a bold doorkeeper indeed who could open long enough to receive my letter.

At the Railway Workers' Club I did get in, only to find myself an hour too early, though the auditorium was packed. The band played often and cheerfully, but the curtain did not rise. I stared at the inscription written across it: "The Workers'

Club—one Conquest of October." The rest of the audience waited patiently. The play was to be a contemporary drama on the problems of flaming youth, but I did not wait for it.

In front of the Construction Workers' Club, on Karl Marx Avenue, I met a kindly secretary. When he heard I was an American, "Let her in, let her in," he cried to the waiting throng. "Here's an American comrade come all the way to Tashkent to see us present Sacco and Vanzetti!" With this plea he even induced an acquaintance of his to give me his seat near the front.

It was in truth a drama of Sacco and Vanzetti which I witnessed, played here in far Tashkent in the Club of the Construction Workers. Compiled by a Leningrad author from the collected notes of the trial, it skillfully and brutally portrayed the communist view of "class justice" in American courts. Seldom have I seen such a cumulation of tragedy, in the old Greek sense of inevitable doom. I remembered also those morality plays of the Middle Ages, whose part was not merely to produce a drama but to arouse the life of the audience. Never have I seen a modern drama which so completely fulfilled this

function. The audience shared the class struggle enacted on the stage. Through the last scene of family farewells in prison, the whole auditorium was shaken by sobs suppressed in coughing; but when the wife of Sacco fell into his arms, three women in the hall shrieked aloud, and one went into such an uncontrollable fit that she had to be carried from the room. As the last curtain closed with Sacco and Vanzetti vanishing behind black bars into a red glow waving "Farewell, farewell, comrades," it was not to an imagined stage group they were appealing, but directly across the footlights to the construction workers of Tashkent. The construction workers of Tashkent were answering across far spaces, ready in that moment to die for the revolution in America. Clearly, there was nothing frivolous about the holiday celebration in this workers' theater.

Other clubs I saw too. The Red Army Club, through whose rooms I passed to and from the Women's Conference, left an impression of chess boards, dominoes, and reading tables. The club of the Communist University where three hundred young men were trying to crash the gate and reach an already packed assembly. Mildly and hopelessly

a Russian professor was exhorting them, "Don't be hooligans." They turned on him, he had insulted them, they said. We fled round the block and across deep pools of mud to another entrance.

"Those are the boys of the Workers' College," he explained to me. "They have no club building of their own, and no place to celebrate the holiday. So they try to break into the celebration of our university. We have 1,500 seats, and have sent tickets to various educational institutions, including the Workers' College. But there are not enough to go around, and these boys think they can get in by sheer mass pressure." The program for which they fought seemed to me hardly worth the struggle. One excellent speech lasting more than an hour, followed by a painfully crude propaganda drama acted by the students, and then many musical numbers in native costume. The professor explained that the Mohammedan races have never had drama, since it was prohibited by their religion, which explains why the student acting is so poor. The music was better.

It was impossible to see everything that was going on. The American business man recommended the circus, where "the strongest man I ever saw" held

twelve men aloft on his body while he strolled around the stage. Acrobats from Kazakstan and riders from the desert enhanced the performance, which he declared one of the best he had ever seen.

Other friends regretted my absence from the banquet of *Pravda Vostoka*, the chief Tashkent newspaper. It cost five roubles a plate, a lordly sum for a reporter or compositor to pay. But every one connected with the paper was there. "The people were thick as porridge," they informed me, "but about midnight lots went home with their children and the rest of us danced till three in the morning. And the food—twenty kinds of *zakuskas*, *osetrina*, caviar, all kinds of meat and fruits and drinks. Why shouldn't there be? It cost five roubles even buying it wholesale through our coöperative." This is the real Russian style, to save on necessities in order to banquet grandly together.

During the afternoons the fun went on, fast and furious. Yet much of the celebration would hardly have counted as fun in western lands. Waiting lines half a block long stood in front of the three museums—the Art Museum, the Museum of Central Asia, and the Museum of the Revolution.

Inside, the crowds were so thick that it was hard to go from room to room. It is a young and vigorous people that spends such holidays.

An original statue by Michael Angelo, brought to Tashkent by a royal collector, was the gem of the Art Museum. Depicting an exquisitely serious boy hard at work with his chisel it was at all times surrounded by an admiring group of Uzbek youngsters. There were some famous Italian masters among the paintings, but most of the collection was Russian, well arranged from the standpoint of popular education.

In the former Governor General's mansion, now used as the Museum of Central Asia, thousands passed each day before the admirable collection showing the life of birds, beasts and men in this ancient country. Crowds hung over relief maps, or gazed at mountain paintings of the Pamir, or stared at stuffed tigers from the jungles and chamois from the icy heights. Still more people thronged the rooms of handicraft and ethnology, where modeled Uzbeks, Turcomans, Kirghiz are shown at looms or making pottery or hammering metal, in native costume and appropriate dwelling. About them are

exhibited examples of native handicraft, the rugs of Merv, or the bronzes and silver-mounted saddles of other districts.

Most unique of the museums is the Museum of Revolution. Its director, an unassuming man in shabby clothes, told me it is one of a dozen similar museums scattered through the Soviet Union. Here one saw the photographs of the original revolutionists of Central Asia—the Social Democratic Party organized in 1900-1905; a model of their underground printing press and of the prison cars in which they were taken away to exile. In a life-sized model of a prison cell with tiny barred window, sat a dummy prisoner under the wondering gaze of Uzbek children. Pictured records of the life of Frunze were here also—the Soviet War Commissar who was a famous native son of Turkestan. Here were crude weapons and shoddy uniforms from the early days of civil war, already passing from memory.

Much history unknown to the world could be gleaned from these documents. A year before the rest of Russia, Turkestan revolted—a nationalist revolt in 1916, against the conscription of native

forced labor. It was bloodily suppressed. The general who put it down remained in command of Turkestan even after the czar fell in distant Petersburg. Gradually the pressure of the local workers removed him. A month before the Soviet revolution in Russia, the worker's Soviets of Tashkent again took power prematurely, and were crushed by an armed expedition sent by Kerensky. The local troops were honeycombed with revolution, ready to side with the workers. When news came of the rise of Soviets in Petersburg, the general in Tashkent tried to disarm the local soldiers; they resisted, and civil war was on.

From the "workers' fortress" in the railway shops, the revolution organized itself and attacked. After four days' fighting the city was in their hands. But this was only the beginning of a struggle which continued many years. Tashkent, a far outpost of empire, was easily separated by war from the central government of Moscow. A local *ataman* in Kirghizia, the emir of Bokhara, and the British Sepoy troops from India by turns seized parts of the countries; when these left, guerilla fighting of the dispossessed white leaders continued for many years in the mountains. During all this period, the power of

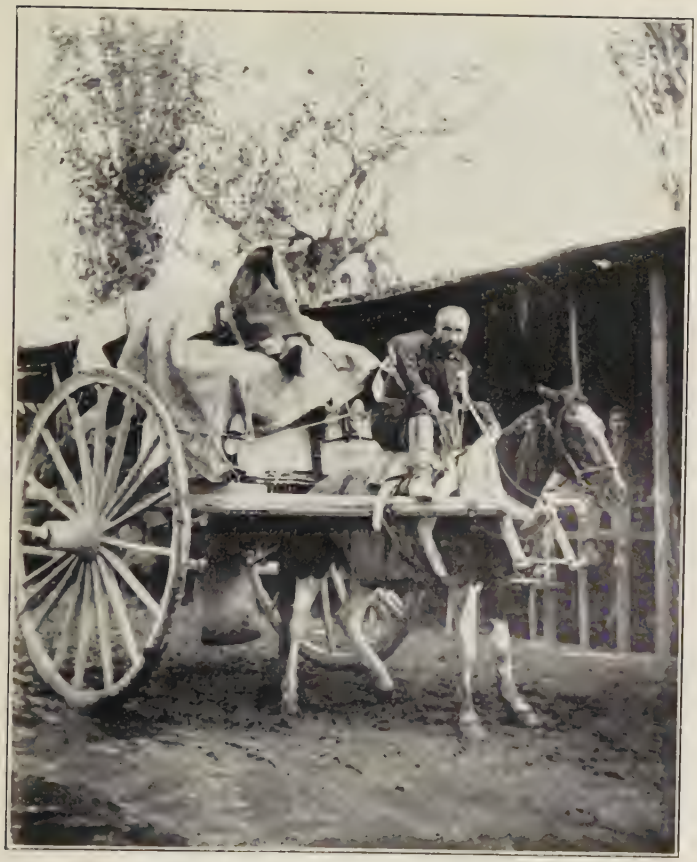
the Soviets continued in the isolated city of Tashkent, except for a brief four days in January, 1919, days of tragic memory. A whole room in the Museum of the Revolution was devoted to the catastrophe of those days.

Osipov, once a czar's officer, became under the revolution a member of the Communist Party and attained the post of War Minister in Turkestan. He used this power to make secret connections with Kolchak in Siberia and the British on the Caspian and staged a seizure of power in Tashkent. He lasted four days, but this sufficed to execute the thirty-five most important men of the Tashkent Soviet Government. Similar executions of the twenty-seven commissars of Baku and the eight from Ashkabad, are part of the history of this period, and show a common plan at work to destroy the revolution by killing its chosen leaders. Forced to flee almost immediately after he had accomplished the executions, Osipov went south, taking most of the gold from the Tashkent banks. The Soviet régime in Tashkent, mourning its leaders, reorganized again permanently. By the end of 1919, they established final connection with Moscow; in 1920 they

added to their power the lands of the Emir of Bokhara and the Khan of Khiva. In 1924 all Turkestan was reorganized into native republics, and Tashkent ceased to be any longer a political capital, but remained the economic center. Political glory passed to Samarkand and several lesser cities.

As I perused this revolutionary history in the crowded museum, some four thousand Russians, Uzbeks, Tadjiks and Kirghiz were perusing it with me. Other recreations there were, however, for the more frivolous. I sat through one sunny afternoon at a soccer football game between Tashkent and Moscow.

On the last evening of holidays a new found friend, met casually at one of the workers' clubs, invited me to a café for late supper. We strolled through tree-roofed streets into whose darkness the stars hardly penetrated, and which even the red and green stars, hammers, sickles and other electric illuminations could only decorate but not make bright. We passed by the opera house, which advertised popular performances by a Moscow company. My companion pointed out with pride that the opera house runs at a deficit; this fact instanced to him



*A Native of Tashkent Driving His Veiled Wife to Town*

the high quality of its productions. The Department of Education of Uzbekistan makes up the deficit of twelve thousand roubles annually.

I paused to read the sign above our restaurant: "Coöperative Dining-room Number Three." A Red soldier was just coming out; he mistook the reason for my halt and reassured me.

"Most coöperative restaurant in Tashkent," he said solemnly. "Nobody gets drunk and nobody fights. . . ." He was alluding to a recent exposé of the competing café of "Proletarian Students," who had been pilloried in the *Pravda Vostoka* for the excesses of their night life.

The dining-hall was crowded with plain tables, covered with sheets of white paper in lieu of cloth. Above them nodded potted asters and chrysanthemums withering in the smoke of cigarettes. Men and women in ordinary clothes, office workers and mechanics, both Russian and Uzbek, filled the room. As everywhere in Central Asia there seemed no trace of race prejudice. Here were flaxen-haired women, rugged men of the north whose features were reddened, not browned, by the sun and wind of the desert to which they had come. Side by side with

them, at the same or adjoining tables, were smooth, dark faces of Uzbek or Afghan or Persian. All sat eating, drinking, listening to Arabian rhapsodies, Hungarian love songs, Uzbek prayer-chants played by the restaurant's Polish orchestra. It seemed to me, as I glanced at the laden tables, that the soldier at the entrance had been unduly pessimistic. Truly, nobody was fighting, but there were several who seemed to be quite happily, dreamily drunk. By an odd contradiction, the liquor which had been prohibited before and during the holiday, was now sold again, on the last night, since the serious celebration was over.

My reveries were broken by the voice of my companion. "As for me, I never get drunk," he averred. "Rest assured of that. Six bottles of beer is my maximum, my absolute maximum." With this reassurance he turned to his second bottle, which on this occasion was his last. I learned the reason for his unusual abstemiousness, when we came to pay the bill. Roast duck, roast apples and roasted nuts we had, with mineral water and beer. I insisted on paying my share, and he disconsolately permitted me

till he saw that the check was only 3.35 roubles; then he grandly took charge.

"I let you talk of paying because I thought I hadn't money," he confessed. "But I have plenty for this; I shall still have ten kopeks left after paying it—and a week's wages due which I can draw to-morrow."

"Do you spend your last cent every week?" I asked him. "Just about," he told me.

"Then what if you are ill or lose your job?" I asked.

"I've lost my job several times," he replied. "But I draw the social insurance. One eats more thinly then; one does not go to cafés in the evening. None the less one eats and survives till the next job and the next celebration."

Thus Tashkent takes holiday, spending its last cent and relying for the morrow on renewed wages or the social insurance; spending its last energy in parades, museums, football, and expecting for to-morrow the ever-renewed energy of youth; as a young nation takes it, as a frontier people whose resources are endless. But along the Syr Darya River

and streets of Old Town, in the ancient *Chai-Khannas* of Asia, the old and middle-aged men of the Uzbeks also took holiday, the thrifty, contemplative holiday of the leisured East. Waiting, with the accumulated patience of centuries, as the throngs of unveiled women and red-kerchiefed pioneers rolled by them, musing what this new Red Star may mean to Central Asia.

*The*
*Cotton Empire*

## CHAPTER THREE

COTTON is the "white gold" of Central Asia. Long ago—nobody knows how many centuries—it came from Africa [1] by the Persian trade routes to these irrigated lands at the foot of the Asian mountains. The native form of the plant is known as *guza*. It has a hard, closed boll of short staple, and is hardier than the more marketable American cotton, which demands much luxury of care and water. Even to-day, though the *guza* has been superseded for all industrial purposes by the imported and adapted varieties, the peasants still prefer it for home-spinning, for the oil it produces in his primitive cotton press is sweeter, and the hard cover of its boll can be fed to cattle.

Cotton was the lure to the southward-driving Russians in the days of the czar's conquests. It was in cotton that the lucky officers assigned to Turkestan made fortunes. Cotton is to-day the basis of the

[1] Former theories held that Turkestan cotton came north from India, but this has been disproved by the researches of Professor Zaitsef of the Seed Selection Station, Tashkent.

economic plans of Moscow for Soviet Central Asia. They dream of the day when they can produce in these irrigated lands all the cotton needed for the Soviet Union, and thus be secure against the need for import which now drains the country to the extent of tens of millions of dollars yearly for cotton bought in America. That is why they spend so much thought and so much money for new irrigation projects, new factories, and credits to cotton-growers.

Nearly half the farm produce of the Uzbek Republic is cotton; nearly half of her industry is the working over of cotton products. The chief autumn festival of the people, except for the modern anniversary of the Revolution, is the "Cotton Day" in which harvest is celebrated and prizes given to the best fields. By propaganda and financial pressure, the government encourages the extension of planting. He who increases the proportion of his cotton lands, finds his taxes reduced; he secures credits for seed and implements and family maintenance until harvest—all issued through the cotton coöperatives in proportion to his acreage. Through a special state subsidy, bread grains are sold below the wholesale cost—to cotton-growers only. So well understood

is the preferential treatment granted to cotton lands, that the advocacy of rice-growing in its place is one of the marks of a counter-revolutionist, and the peasants are over-stating their cotton lands to the tax commissioners, whereas once they understated them. This is of importance chiefly to statisticians who cannot tell what relation the present acreage bears to the past.

As soon as the summer grows warm in Central Asia, the propaganda for cotton begins in the *Pravda Vostoka*. "The cotton-growing program must be met," shrieks the headline across three columns. This is followed by exposures of dilatory local officials. The selected cotton seeds in such a region are reaching the peasant too late for the proper sowing season; in another district are floods, and cries for help demand the mobilization of government resources. When the crop begins to be gathered, the wails change in tone. A bumper crop, and who is to handle it? Why weren't the railways ready? Why weren't the warehouses built? Cotton lies under the sky! Whose political head is now to come off? Get the transport somehow! Are the rains to arrive before we have sheltered our cotton?

In another month the columns devoted to cotton have other complaints. The beautiful cotton plantation at Bairam Ali, a former estate of the czar, is under attack. "The autumn sowing at Bairam Ali has begun fifteen days late and proceeds by fits and starts because the tractors were not properly repaired. There is fear that it will be completed too late for success." Is such detailed solicitude considered news in any other land? "The announced plans of the Cotton Committee are every year unfulfilled," begins another muck-raking article. A day or two later comes the happy news that "the Cotton-Growers Co-operative of Uzbekistan has begun to install motion picture machines in its rural stations. It will place twenty-five during the next two months, which will serve 12,000 peasants." Even the joy of the movies depends on the profits from cotton.

Most of the irrigation systems in Central Asia today are dykes of wood and earth, the method brought by the Arabs. They need continuous repair and often break under high water, sending floods to destroy village gardens and robbing waiting lands of moisture. Then men, women and children turn out to labor day and night digging ditches, in the

hope of diverting the waters from their villages or dragging them perhaps five miles away to distant fields. Only two modern irrigation projects were installed during the fifty years of Russian capitalism; that on the czar's personal estate of Bairam Ali and a great canal begun on the Hungry Steppe—completed only after the Revolution.

Throughout centuries, due partly to the devastation of conquests, and partly to the primitive planning of the irrigation systems, lands once reclaimed have gone back again and again to desert, only to be reclaimed again under some more peaceful rule. The different conquerors are judged, in the history of Central Asia, by whether under their care "irrigation flourished"; this was both symbol and material basis for the flourishing of other arts and sciences. At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, nearly nine million acres of land were irrigated in czarist Turkestan; but almost an equal amount of desert land showed by the traces of ancient canals that it had once been fertile, and some time, decades or centuries ago, returned to waste.

During the revolution and the civil war that fol-

lowed, the cotton-growing of Turkestan was ruined utterly. Continued battles along the railroad cut it off from its Moscow market. Endless local banditry and famine wrought more complete havoc with the delicate adjustments of the irrigated districts even than in the grain fields of northern Russia. The lands under irrigation fell to one-third of their former area and even these were planted to bread grains, for which the climate was ill adapted, in the desperate effort to ward off hunger. Cotton-growing ceased almost entirely. Such was the period when the Cotton Committee was organized and put in charge of the national emergency.

Year by year, with strenuous patient struggle, the cotton-growing of Soviet Central Asia was reëstablished. Tens of millions were spent and are still being spent for irrigation works to replace the lands that went bad from neglect in wartime. From ten to fifteen million dollars a year is the budget planned for years into the future. Propaganda and credits and tax relief are the weapons used to induce increased cotton-planting on the reclaimed soil. In 1928, though the irrigated lands had still only reached five-sixths of their prewar area, yet the

cotton crop was as great as formerly. It supplied two-thirds of the cotton needed by the whole Soviet Union.

The control of cotton and of all the economic life of Central Asia cuts across the political boundaries of the separate new republics. Though Tashkent has been replaced as a political capital by Samarkand, Ashkhabad and other lesser cities, it remains the center of economic rule. The organ through which this dominance is expressed is the Economic Council of Central Asia. Moscow appoints the chairman, but its other twenty members are selected by the various local republics, which appoint their commissars of trade and finance and agriculture and labor, and one or two other important administrators, to sit in its sessions.

Under the jurisdiction of the Economic Council come all the economic activities which concern more than one native republic. The Water Department of Central Asia, the Cotton Committee of Central Asia, the State Steamship Lines, the Silk Committee, the Central Asian Coal, the Asia Grain Supply, and the Central Asia Health Resorts. If the Kirghiz Republic wishes to extend its irrigation, and the river

begins in the mountains of the Tadjiks and ends in the plains of the Uzbeks, it is the Water Department of Central Asia which must balance their claims. "If there is not enough water for all districts," said a member of the Economic Council to me, "we decide in favor of the most needy. We have no discipline to enforce our rulings, since the Economic Council is a voluntary association of the local governments. Theoretically, any local government can appeal to Moscow against our decision; but practically they almost never do."

The Cotton Committee of Central Asia is one of the largest and surely the most powerful, among the Cotton Trusts of the world. It is the great cotton monopoly of the Soviet Government; it contracts in advance for all the cotton grown in ancient Turkestan. Its turnover reached in 1928 the sum of $175,000,000, of which over $100,000,000 went into the hands of cotton-growers, and the rest maintained sixty-three consolidated cotton-ginning factories, a dozen or more cottonseed oil factories and a number of giant seed-producing farms.

Though the Cotton Committee is a state owned organization, its board of directors are by no means

all communists. Most of the management is composed of cotton experts, some of whom have been in the cotton business of Turkestan for more than thirty years. Engineers, agriculturists, scientists, administrators form the board, mixed with a few political appointees to ensure connection with Soviet policies.

The Cotton Committee is therefore a business organization, a trust, functioning not unlike capitalist trusts anywhere. Its capitalization is $45,000,000, which includes its many properties, but does not include land, since "land is reckoned as nothing" or as air and water, in Soviet capitalization. It enters as major stockholder into three subsidiary companies, the Cotton Committees of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakstan, the minor stock being held by the native governments of those republics. On this stock it expects to make a profit and does so; but it does not aim to make large profits. "If any such were in sight," said its manager to me, smiling, "we should be ordered to reduce the price at which we sell cleaned cotton to Moscow. This, in fact, has already happened to us. We aim to make only enough profit to sustain our various scientific stations and our war on pests, to subsidize

agricultural experts in the cotton regions and to sell fertilizer below cost to cotton-growers. Anything beyond this goes into cutting the price of our product. We do not even expect to make enough profit to expand our business with new factories; the money for these must come from new capitalization, authorized from Moscow.

The system by which the Cotton Committee stimulates, improves and controls the growing of cotton entitles it to rank as one of the truly modern business organizations of the world. Under its tutelage backward peasants with wooden sticks for plows produce cotton more standardized than can be bought in America. The seeds for a whole district are of one variety, supplied by the Cotton Trust; the crop may be poor or abundant, but it is of uniform quality.

Close to a million dollars is spent yearly on the scientific research stations of the Cotton Committee, selecting seed, studying fertilizers and methods of irrigation. Following these are the great farms of the Cotton Committee, which produce the selected seed for the peasants. The system of peasant credits and tax reductions, combined with a protective

method of price-fixing keeps production steadily rising. The circle is completed by a far-flung organization of cotton-ginning factories, a building department which erects new ones, a machine factory which creates cotton-gins, an experimental factory which tries out machines and methods. Lastly, when "Cotton Days" arrive in celebration of harvest, it is the Cotton Committee which gives prizes and publicity to the best crops in the region.

Five miles from the city of Tashkent I visited the Seed Selection Station of the Cotton Committee, where Professor Zaitsef and his staff of scientists experiment with new varieties of cotton and produce the seeds which are later to conquer the fields of Turkestan. The professor's yearly budget is $250,000, a sum which would be quite respectable for any American foundation, and is enormous for Central Asia. A little community of six hundred souls, including scientists, clerks, farm workers and their families, live on this experimental farm of three hundred acres. They have their own school, club, central dining-hall, motion pictures, and many radio receivers in the newly built dwellings for the staff. All the buildings, laboratories, residences, green-

houses and warehouses are overcrowded and expanding yearly.

The professor claims to have over 1,500 varieties of cotton plant from every cotton-growing land on earth. Here are tall tree-forms grown in greenhouses brought from tropical regions of Honolulu, the upper Amazon or Abyssinia. Since they mature only after several years, and winter frost kills them, they are of no economic value for Turkestan but serve for scientific study and possibly for cross-breeding. From Guatemala and Panama, from Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela, from Burma, China, India and the Malay Straits, from Persia and Afghanistan and Palestine and Italy, from the Transvaal and Uganda and Rhodesia and Nigeria, as well as from the better known cotton districts of the United States and Egypt—come the great mass of cotton plants from which Professor Zaitsef and his assistants have produced the ten or twenty varieties which are proving industrially useful in Central Asia. They are always working on new varieties.

The American cotton plant must be "adapted" before it can be grown in the much shorter summer

season of Central Asia, which counts on 170-180 frostless days in place of the 210-220 of southern United States. Professor Zaitsef has developed one variety which will grow further north than any other known; it pays for this hardiness by a short staple and diminished productivity but is still industrially valuable for the irrigated steppes of Kazakstan. Other highly productive varieties of long staple are developed for the hot sun-baked oases of Turkmenistan. Still others are in process of breeding. Other departments of the Selection Station experiment with 1,600 varieties of lucerne as the needed alternative to cotton to avoid crop depletion; still others study native fiber plants and have found textile possibilities in wild bushes, which are now being tested for commercial availability in Moscow.

The Seed Selection Station by no means exhausts the scientific work of the Cotton Trust. An hour's ride south of Tashkent I visited the Fertilizer Station where various fertilizers, methods of plowing, of irrigating, of applying the fertilizer, are tested in 3,500 different plots of 200 square yards each. The month in which the fertilizer shall be applied, the

way it shall be introduced into the soil, the depth of plowing, the number of times a season the irrigation water shall be turned on, and whether it shall be applied slowly or swiftly—all these problems engage the attention of the scientific staff at the Station. They also make laboratory examinations of soils from all parts of Central Asia, sent by their many smaller branches. They send out expeditions to locate possible supplies of fertilizing minerals so that they will not be compelled to import them. They are experimenting especially with methods of treating cotton seed refuse, so as to develop a good fertilizer from this universal by-product.

One of the most spectacular properties of the Cotton Trust is the gigantic farm Pakhta-Aral (Island of Cotton), fifteen miles long by three miles wide, where enough seed is produced to supply nearly one-fourth the annual needs of Central Asia. It is a new, irrigated farm, carved in the past few years out of what was formerly known as the Hungry Steppe—a great desert region four hours by rail south of Tashkent. Six small townlets with a population of several thousand souls are scattered along its central canal; all these inhabitants are concerned

with the growing and picking of cotton. In the Central Hamlet I saw a new school building, a hospital with thirty beds, a club house, in addition to the main offices. New workmen's dwellings are springing up like mushrooms; fleets of tractors are kept in central locations. Electric lights are strung along the streets, lit by the power-house which supplies current to the machine shops by day and light to the streets by night.

The manager of Pakhta-Aral is a tanned, weather-beaten peasant with a common school education. As first assistant he has a scientific agriculturist, and as second assistant a Kazak—"in order," he said, "that in time the Kazaks may learn to run these farms which are located in their country." The manager's salary was $112 a month; the average cotton-picker made $30 a month on piece work. The workers received free working clothes, and also living quarters, including heat, light, boiling water for tea. Seasonal workers might stay in these quarters all year without charge if they wished, awaiting the seasons of labor. Many of them left their families here while hunting casual jobs elsewhere.

Though most of the cotton-pickers were natives,

the typical social life of the present day Russian was already flourishing in Pakhta-Aral. The club house was jammed nightly with meetings of the Women's Club, the Young Communist Club, the drama circle. There were two local orchestras in Central Hamlet alone, an art study club and many other study circles. A library of 4,500 books of which more than half were fiction, sent forth traveling sections to supply the other hamlets. Three times a week the motion pictures came; on Thursday nights the radio loudspeaker gave dance music for the young folks from the sending station in Tashkent. Eighteen newspapers and fourteen journals were subscribed for by the club library. One of the hamlets maintained a day nursery, and women cotton-pickers who had babies were sent to it by preference. Thus rapidly in three years' time has community life been established in Pakhta-Aral, the largest but not the only farm of the Cotton Trust.

Pakhta-Aral makes a very small profit, but most of the farms of the Cotton Trust run at a deficit. Government management with trade-union labor has proved unable to compete with the native peasant, whose whole family works in the field and lives at

a low standard. Due to this intensive care by the peasant family the largest cotton harvest per acre comes from the smallest holdings, according to Mr. Nikolsky, manager of the Cotton Trust's work in Central Asia. "But this large harvest on small holdings is very expensive in labor. If the peasant counted the hours his family spent in the cotton fields, he would be getting less per hour than we must pay our hired farm workers. We, therefore, maintain our farms not as profitable concerns competing with the peasants, but as seed producers to standardize the cotton of Central Asia."

"Why are your peasants willing to produce cotton at prices less than a farm hand wage?" I asked him.

"Because low as it is, he makes more on cotton than on any other crop. Under the conditions of life in peasant households, he finds it profitable to labor on cotton. Incidentally, the Cotton Trust takes care that this shall remain so, as we wish to induce the peasant to plant more cotton each year, so that the Soviet Union may not have to spend tens of millions every year in America."

How are the prices fixed for cotton in a land where a state monopoly faces four million natives

whose major business is cotton-growing, and who produce for only one buyer? The ordinary price-fixing by competitive markets cannot apply here. Mr. Nikolsky explained how the Cotton Trust arrives at its figures, through estimates by farm specialists and engineers in all parts of Central Asia. The continuous staff of economic investigators reports on the labor cost each year in producing the expected harvest, on the budgets of family living, on the cost of peasant labor in other sorts of farming. "We aim," said Mr. Nikolsky, "to make our decision objective, for we are interested not in beating down the peasant but in encouraging an increasing cotton crop. However, the peasants themselves cannot be expected to agree with our findings. They have their cotton-growing coöperatives, which now include practically all the cotton-growers, and these organizations contest our figures and demand higher prices for cotton. In this they are usually supported by the local Departments of Agriculture and the local native governments generally, which are interested in getting as much money as possible into their districts. We make our reports to the Economic Council of Central Asia, which considers our de-

mands together with those of all Central Asian industry and makes recommendations to Moscow. In Moscow it is fought out before the highest economic organ of the Soviet Union, which is interested both in increasing cotton-growing in Turkestan and also in cutting down the cost of cotton clothing for the northern Russian" . . . Last year, incidentally, the struggle over cotton prices dragged itself out till the highest authorities of the Communist Party intervened in the name of national unity.

However strenuous the internal struggle may be over cotton prices, the world market price is not allowed to affect them. A year or two ago, there was a spectacular crash in the American cotton market due to overproduction. The textile industry of Russia would gladly have doubled its American purchases at the extremely low prices—barely sixty percent of the previous year's prices. But the Department of Internal Trade refused to permit this, until the textile industry had purchased all the Turkestan crop at much higher prices fixed by collective bargaining. Every Russian worker and peasant that year paid higher prices for his cotton goods in order that the cotton-growers of Turkestan should not be ruined.

For the government held that if the cotton-growing, once devastated by civil war and now slowly reviving, were to be again stunned by the competition of the world market, it could hardly again recover for a decade. No mere altruism toward hungry Uzbek peasants dictated this measure. But the hope of stabilizing a cotton empire in the East.

In the cotton-ginning mills of Central Asia, a policy of consolidations has been pursued. In place of 197 small privately owned mills of the prewar days, there are only 63 mills to-day, improved and mechanized and strategically located. In the first years of the Cotton Committee, these mills boasted of their fine new gins from America. To-day they have a prouder boast—that they no longer buy American machinery. They make their own in Tashkent. The labor organization and the social life surrounding the cotton mills are the same as elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

For purposes of experiment into the best ways of running factories, the Cotton Committee maintains a unique institution—the Experimental Factory, run not for production but for scientific experiment. Every new variety of cotton-ginning machinery that

appears anywhere in the world is bought and tested here; any new devices that are approved are incorporated in the locally made cotton-gins. (There are as yet no patent conventions which prevent this.) The temperatures and moistures at which cotton may be best ginned; the proper speeds, the proper loadings—all these things are determined for each variety of cotton-gin. The method of cleaning various kinds of cotton to preserve its length of staple; the testing of cotton from various regions as to tensile strength and time of ripening, are other experiments made in this factory. Most important of all, perhaps, they are engaged in an effort to extend the season in which cotton may be ginned. At present, the mills stand idle more than half the year; it has been held that the summer months are too hot and dry for ginning cotton. The Experimental Factory hopes to prove otherwise, and by proper methods of ventilation, and moistening the air, to make it possible to clean cotton in the dryest hot season. All the results of its tests are applied in the sixty-three mills of the Cotton Committee.

Besides the cotton-ginning mills and the cotton-seed oil factories of the Cotton Committee, two

mammoth new spinning factories operate to-day in Central Asia. They are the first of their kind; and soon to be followed by weaving mills. It is the aim of the Soviet Union to produce all varieties of cotton cloth here, not only to supply its own native republics, but to export into Persia and Afghanistan. The czar made of Russian Turkestan a colony, ruled by soldiers, drained of its raw materials for Moscow textile mills. The Soviet Union intends to create here a local industry, and the first native proletariat of the Middle East.

They are building for the future a basis of power. For this they are planting at the farthest outpost of empire which touches the Afghans, the Persians, to some extent the Chinese and Indians, a growing population of industrial workers, organized in trade unions whose center is Moscow. While with one hand the Soviet Government offers to the Uzbeks, the Turcomans, the Kirghiz, a new political freedom, with the other hand she binds them to herself by close economic interest. The peasant who gets his seed and implements and even food on credit from the all-embracing Cotton Trust, and sells his crop to the only buyer, fixing prices through collective

bargaining in Moscow, and the new industrial worker, who gets the eight-hour day and social insurance from the trade-unions of that same center—are thus knit intimately, across a thousand miles of nomad's deserts, with the Soviet Union.

*Power Returns*
*to Samarkand*

## CHAPTER FOUR

I SHALL always be glad that I first saw Samarkand in the golden glow of her beauty, when frosty November dawns melted swiftly into gorgeous sunny days; when the first rains had sapphired the sky and turned desert hills into snow peaks and laid the dust of the plains, but had not yet made mud. Then I learned that having loved and left many cities, one can still fall in love with a new one; that sheer blue-gold weather can be as intoxicating to the critical senses as champagne, or as youth. There came other rains, and the grayness of shabby old age descended upon her, on old Samarkand still sitting where she sat twenty-three centuries ago, to receive her first recorded conqueror, Alexander. Yet two hours after the rain she again wove sunny magic.

Even the animals felt this magic. Elsewhere camels are plodding creatures, patiently threading walled streets or desert sands. Here I laughed with fellow feeling as I saw a camel gallop blithely

around a bend in the boulevard, tossing into the air a foot above him his human freight—a ball of colorful rags topped by a brown-faced grin. Elsewhere in Russia the horses are beasts of burden, dragging ramshackle droskies over the cobbles; here my first horse frightens me by racing madly down the street like the desert nomad that he is, quite unaware that he has a cart behind him.

After all deductions for the weather's magic, surely always those tiny donkeys on all the streets and boulevards are gay sights. They are surmounted by such solemn men, bearded and turbaned, much larger than the donkeys, with feet tucked up to keep from dragging. The booths at street corners, festooned with green and purple grapes in monstrous clusters; the long-cloaked red and maroon merchants solemnly clasping hands in the historic market place, to seal some bargain involving a few roubles; gay plush cap shops festooning the walls of some famous ruin; colored laundry hung out to dry from carved walls of some ancient seat of religious learning—here is the golden heart of sunny Asia, mellow mother Asia, hot young Asia.

Samarkand is renewing her youth. There is, to

use a flippant western word, a boom in Samarkand. Never, it seems, have I seen so many new buildings side by side with so many historic monuments. Here is a new bank, a new Department of Agriculture building; across the boulevard from it a new girls' school, complete with dormitory and class-rooms. Here is a new building for the Department of State Industry; a new Teacher-Training School. These I noticed in my first casual walks through the city. Farther out, to be reached only with intention, is the new silk factory for nine hundred and fifty workers, most of whom are housed near by in new workmen's dwellings; and the new Hospital of the Uzbek Republic, costing $600,000, a cluster of gorgeously modern buildings of stone and glass.

Power has come again to Samarkand. Once the capital of many conquerors, she is a capital once again. In the new division of Turkestan into republics, Samarkand is the government seat of the Uzbeks. Here is the ancient tomb of Tamerlane, and here is the modern farm hand president's six room White House. Here meets the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbeks, and here are the headquarters of education, and health, and agricul-

ture, and justice. Here is a Musical High School from which gay youth goes forth to sing and dance propaganda into the villages.

Samarkand is overcrowded. Congresses and conferences flood its halls, and the building of hotels has by no means kept pace with the building of government offices. On none of my visits did I find a room in any hotel. But this may have been bad luck, no more. And I was most hospitably entertained on each occasion by kindly Samarkanders who took pity on the stranger. Once I stayed at the Clara Zetkin School for Women, and the second time in the president's own mansion. Neither of these quarters was palatial. In the school for women I shared a tiny bedroom with the director, her sister and the teacher of physical training; in the presidential home I was given a nightly use of the divan in the secretary's living-room, also occupied for sleeping by his mother.

Because I wished to learn of Samarkand the Ancient, I called first on Professor Viatkin, who under varying rulers and conditions has given all his life to studying the archeology of Central Asia. Today he is head of the Commission on Ancient Monu-

ments. A kindly and rather sad gentleman, not interested in politics or in all the fury of new building in this old capital. He is well aware of the world importance of the great historic monuments; he remembers the Germans who journeyed hither before the war for research, and the Americans of the Carnegie Foundation back in 1908; it hurts him to realize that he is responsible for the preservation of all these relics, and that he has such meager funds to care for them properly.

"Seventy important memorials of the past are in Uzbekistan alone," he told me. "We do not know how many more are undiscovered. For such research we have no money at all. Our 34,000 roubles this year barely suffices to keep the most important from falling to pieces. In the famous Registan of Samarkand we must chain columns in position, or they will crash into ruins and spoil other things as well. A few things like this we can do; it is next to nothing."

The glory of Samarkand from before the dawn of history unrolled before me as we talked in Professor Viatkin's crowded dining-room and study. He pictured to me the many conquerors who have come into

these rich watered lands of Central Asia. Always here has lived a settled people, farmers, clustering from prehistoric days around the hillside streams and following them with irrigation into the plains. Always the harsher nomad hordes from the surrounding deserts have overwhelmed them and become in their turn settlers. Samarkand, like a fair mistress, submitted to their violence, and then subdued them to the ways of her household. Each of her masters, as far as he might, destroyed the remembrance of all past lovers. Nothing to-day remains of Alexander's reign but a few Greek coins and figurines unearthed from time to time as sign that once Hellenic culture enriched this soil.

The earliest known peoples here were the Tadjiks, Persian in race and culture, high in musical and poetic attainments. They still survive in the distant mountain villages and as a city population in the valleys. They lost their fertile lands to the invaders but kept the superiority of trade and culture. The Arabs came, bringing the Arab civilization of the seventh and eighth centuries. There followed a local dynasty of high culture, when irrigation flourished and books were many and the arts were

prized. Raw Turkish tribes from the East overwhelmed them and passed beyond to settle Asia Minor. They were followed in the thirteenth century by the Mongols under Genghis Khan and his lesser sons. Warlike and strong invaders these, but destroyers who left the rich lands ruined. Tamerlane, who came after, brought a renaissance of literature and building. His are the most magnificent monuments now remaining. After him descended from the north the Uzbeks, uncultured but virile nomads. Later, only fifty years ago, the Russians.

On invitation of Professor Viatkin, I took next morning one of the large red auto-busses which furnish modern transportation to this ancient city. I was bound for the Registan, for hundreds of years the central market place, flanked by stately *medresses*, the religious academies of the Moslems. It is still today a market place much attended, as I realized when I stood in line and fought for a place in the auto. No prestige whatever attaches to being a white woman in a crowd of jostling natives bent on purchase. This, it chanced, was one of the two weekly market days. Past the various government buildings we swept, along the wide shaded boulevards of the

new city, and across a ravine to the colorful jostling streets of Samarkand the Ancient.

A certain stark grandeur distinguishes the ruins of Asia. Torn and lofty, covered with brilliant mosaics, they stand in patient aloofness under the golden noons. Beneath them whispers or roars the life of the market, with its petty barter, and its satisfaction of daily needs. Under the gorgeous walls of the Registan I saw a popular peep-show, behind the curtains of which veiled women removed their veils to chuckle at what they saw there; by the pictures of Egyptian and Assyrian gods and the scientific mottoes, I judge it was anti-religious propaganda. From a high tribune in front of the famous *medresse* which faces the square a speaker was taking subscriptions to the latest government loan while a small crowd stopped to listen and edged away—as no doubt was done in some form in the days of Tamerlane.

Avoiding the massive processions of camels and rumbling processions of carts, I sought refuge from the traffic under a high stone cavern, built for who knows what purpose by its original architect, but serving now as the cap market, where the males of

Samarkand beautify themselves with giddy contraptions in plush and velvet. Dodging down a side street I came to still another ancient *medresse*, or religious school, now turned to secular uses. A crowd of young Tadjiks hailed me to point out the relics in their building. They were taking a short course to become village teachers. The mechanism of my kodak so enthralled them that they all took turns looking into the finder and shouted with triumph at what they saw. In this gleeful occupation they lost their places in the waiting line for lunch.

The gauntly beautiful ruined arches of Bibi Khannum cut the blue sky at one end of the street. Of this ancient mosque there are many legends, chiefly concerning the favorite wife of Tamerlane, who built the temple to honor him during his absence. It is said that the architect became so inflamed with love for his sovereign, that he could not set his genius at work without her favors; and that she, burning with impatience to celebrate her lord's return, sacrificed his household honor to honor him the better in public. The fate meted out to the offenders is variously recorded, but tales of death

still haunt the high towers of this old ruin. On some of its broken slabs I saw two Uzbeks from the market sipping tea in the shade of the walls and cutting juicy melons on the storied stones.

Beyond the walls of Samarkand and beyond the dusty plain devoted to trading in horses rise the exquisite domes of tombs built for the family of Tamerlane. In all Central Asia there is no cluster of ancient monuments more harmonious in their setting of trees and sky, and perfectly balanced stairways leading from mausoleum to mausoleum. Vivid mosaics, stone steps worn by the feet of pilgrims, a famous old Koran exhibited reverently in the central mosque where Tamerlane himself may have stood to pray for the souls of his dead—these were the perfect memorials of the power that is gone. On my way back to the Registan I saw the cruder modern emblems of the new power that takes the place that once was his.

In the midst of the bazaar, with its shouts and camels, its donkeys and bargaining merchants, arose a large and ugly building: "Universal Stores, Uzbek State Trading Company, No. 3." The crowds outside were greater than anywhere else in the market;

*The Tombs of Tamerlane's Family*

they were standing in line to buy cotton goods or soap at prices below those in the private booths. Around a corner, with plentiful red banners, stood the "House of the Dekkans"—the Central Asian word for peasants. I stepped inside and found a small exhibition of modern farm machinery, and many placards about fertilizers and seed selection and the war on pests. The room was empty. With some trouble I unearthed the doorkeeper, and was told that the *dekkans* were all out shopping, but would return en masse for sleep in the evening.

Some of them, in fact, were already assembled in the red *Chai-Khanna*, or tea house, around the corner, where they squatted on carpeted platforms above the road of the market and solemnly quaffed tea under pictures of Lenin. Almost next door was a hall announcing the "Fourth Congress of the Uzbek Teachers Union," and informing all delegates that dormitories had been opened for their accommodation at the Central Labor Union and also at the Club of the Teachers. A block away was the main workers' club, named after Tomsky, a congress of the Peasant Coöperatives of Uzbekistan was going on in its crowded, badly lighted hall. With

high pitched, monotonous voice, an Uzbek peasant woman, unveiled, with her hair covered by a Russian kerchief, was complaining from the platform about the bad organization of village coöperatives. Here was change, surely, from the days of Tamerlane.

Following her came a tall, dark peasant, in a coarse wrapper of brown, unlined homespun, with high leather boots and little round embroidered skullcap, now very shabby. Though only a farm laborer, he spoke with an air of fierce, firm authority that would have suited a chieftain of Genghis Khan, just descended from his charger. "I don't know the methods of order in a meeting and I don't much care," he said. "I don't know how to begin a speech or what must be included. But—what do we see in the village? The rich peasants get the new machines on credit and we poor ones don't."

As the discussion proceeded, a baby boy wandered down the aisle pulling his rough coat back from his otherwise quite naked brown body. No one paid any attention to him. Leaving the assembly, I mingled with the after-market crowd of shoppers jamming all methods of transport on their way home. Sacks of nuts and melons and rich green

raisins, the kind most highly prized, filled carts and busses. Above the crowd tossed turbans of blue and white and orange, sometimes stuffed with the smaller purchases. In more than one turban I saw a shining glass lamp chimney thrust, like a strange ornament, to keep it safe above the jostling turmoil. I returned to the chief restaurant of Samarkand, whose oilcloth tables were already very sloppy from the succession of diners. On its walls were propaganda placards, with fiercely gesticulating figures pointing their fingers, reproaching that "You, You You—are NOT YET a member of the Coöperative." Truly American advertising methods go everywhere!

A few evenings later I attended the opening session of the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbek Republic—highest administrative authority in the land. It does not control railways, or posts and telegraphs, or army, or foreign trade and ultimate economic programs; these economic lines of dominance are dictated from Moscow, in whose central government Uzbekistan is represented. The session which I visited controls, however, education, health, agriculture, courts, local trade and industry, making its own budget within the limits of a general

tax policy fixed by the Central Government of the Union. The budget of the Uzbek Republic, incidentally, shows large and increasing deficits, due to the expansion of education, health measures, and irrigation in a region too backward to pay heavy taxes. The deficit this year amounts to forty million roubles and is met by Moscow, as part of its announced policy of "equalizing the backward regions with the center."

The Central Executive Committee was considering the budget when I entered. I saw before me a long, narrow hall, unimposing, the typical meeting hall of a small town, decorated in the typical Asian manner with strings of tissue paper flags in all colors festooned from wall to wall. To these were added many red streamers, and a more than life-size statue of Lenin at the rear of the stage, arising from a sea of red flags. Above the stage a large red banner contained, in place of the slogans on world revolution which used to grace such assemblies, the much more sober words which are today the fashion: "We grow, we strengthen, we are building socialism and shall complete its building." . . . A larger banner at the far end of the hall

was inscribed with the words of Lenin: "The Soviet Power will be carried to success only when in it take part the millions of workers and peasants."

Much calmer ideals these, than the war cries once expressed. And were indeed the millions of workers and peasants taking part? Certainly the governing body I saw before me was native, under whatever methods of pressure they might have been chosen from distant villages. Uzbeks in many colored robes, padded against the sharp autumn weather, were the chief figures. The proceedings went on in the Uzbek language, but the more important parts were translated into Russian, "for the benefit of the Europeans." These "Europeans," by which name was included Russians, Jews and one Lett, numbered forty-eight, one-quarter of the assembly. Of the rest, one hundred and twenty-seven, or a clear majority, were Uzbeks, while twenty-six came from minor Asiatic nationalities, resident in the Uzbek Republic.

Behind the long red table which filled the front of the stage sat the Presidium, a dozen or more Uzbeks, in the usual gaudy gowns and plush skull-caps. One of them was a woman, Shadiva, aged

twenty-two, with the naïve, friendly smile of a sixteen year old girl. When she flitted about the hall in a mussed blue flannel blouse, with a green velvet cap above two long black curls and high black boots to the knee, it was impossible to believe the tales I was told of her past. A miner's daughter of Fergana, sold in marriage at the age of ten, violated before she was yet a woman, she lived with her middle-aged husband a tragic existence. When Russian women began to organize the women's movement of Uzbekistan, Shadiva was one of their first adherents. They taught her to read; they discovered and trained her capacity for eloquence; they got a divorce for her. She is married now to a youth of her own age, a modernist and communist; she holds great audiences spellbound with her oratory. Her former husband also has remarried, but they say he has never ceased to regret the flame-like Shadiva.

In and out among the members of the Presidium moved the secretaries of the Central Executive, some of them Russians, some of them drawn from the Asiatic nationalities of the Caucasus, which have had more education than the Uzbeks and are now supplying many organizers and secretaries in Central

Asia. I inquired of one of these to what extent the government in Samarkand was run by the natives. In the chief assembly their predominance was obvious, but how about the civil departments of the government? He told me that the departments of Education and of Social Welfare are almost entirely manned by Uzbeks, since teaching is chiefly done in the Uzbek language. The Finance Department is seventy percent Uzbek. The Department of Agriculture is Uzbek except for its farm experts; the Water Department except for its engineers. The local courts are all Uzbek, but in the higher courts some fifteen to twenty percent are Russians. Russians persist throughout the Health Department, since practically no Uzbeks have as yet had time to learn medicine. In the higher economic departments, such as the State Planning Board or the Department of State Industries, about half the staff is Russian.

. . . . . .

The life of Samarkand is in her water, brought by a primitive system of irrigation learned from the Arabs. Every year its dykes of wood and earth need repairing; in some years high water destroys

them and floods whole regions. The Water Department invited me to visit their new irrigation dam at Revat Hodja, thirty miles from the city. Built now of reënforced concrete, under an engineer who once constructed the Baikal section of the Trans-Siberian Railway and part of the line to Murmansk, it is attracting visits from peasants throughout the Uzbek Republic.

Modern technical methods know neither race nor boundary. When I stopped for lunch at the chief engineer's house near the main dam, I might have been in any one of a dozen construction camps in the far west of America. The same clean, bare floors, the same whitewashed walls covered with blue prints, the same working tables and hard chairs. Even the food was the same—chiefly canned goods, the diet of the breaker of trails the world over. Across the table was the same type of keen face, lean and efficient, busy with the skilled subduing of nature and caring little for politics. Out of the window was the same type of landscape—brown, unreclaimed fields leading to mountains and a single telephone line to connect with civilization. Only when I crossed the room and looked out at the med-

ley of turbaned figures standing by the dyke did I recall that this was the oldest continent of earth instead of the youngest.

When after lunch we went to see the dam, which runs for two kilometers across many channels eaten by former floods, we met a delegation of peasants come to inspect it also. Middle-aged men, with voluminous robes and large white turbans, sat sedately on little clay mounds above the river, staring long and contentedly down at the swiftly working machines. Layers of reënforced concrete were being applied under their eyes; men like themselves in turbans and flapping robes were working at pumps. Besides this group of shrewd and patient peasants there was another inspection. Jumping hastily from crag to crag the photographer of the State Cinema of the Uzbeks was busily snapping scenes which would go forth to village movies. News of modern irrigation was to reach those peasants too far away to visit Revat Hodja.

"The local peasants were very skeptical when we began," smiled the engineer. "But now that our dyke and canal are nearing completion, they know enough about irrigation to be very enthusiastic.

Even before Revat Hodja opens, scores of peasant delegations have come to Samarkand from all Uzbekistan, asking for similar improvements to their ancient irrigation systems. They offer to pay for the engineers, the machines, the cement, and iron, and to furnish their own unskilled labor. Some fifty such local companies have been organized; a Meliorative Fund exists in the Water Department to aid them with three to five years' credits. No longer does the government rebuild their irrigation systems for nothing; it reserves its budget funds for reclaiming entirely new land. On the old land the peasants themselves are willing to pay for improvement. But Revat Hodja was done on government budget. The dyke and the ten kilometer canal cost seven million roubles. It will stabilize irrigation on a million acres, of which one hundred and fifty thousand will be newly reclaimed land. This will be distributed without cost to the local peasants, but we estimate that the government will get its money back on the increased cotton crop in not more than seven years."

The usual social life of the Russian industrial community had already been introduced, rather

sketchily, into this temporary construction camp, where somewhat less than half the workers were Uzbeks. There was equal pay for equal work regardless of race, but the Russians had a greater proportion of the skilled jobs. The single men lived in barracks, many of the married men who had worked for some time on the job had attained to private quarters of two rooms. The Uzbeks had separate dormitories from the Russians, "since their habits of living differ from ours."

I asked the secretary of the Camp Committee if there was much race prejudice. "No," he said, after a moment's thought. "Rather the opposite. When quarrels occur, it is Russians who quarrel with Russians, and Uzbeks with Uzbeks. They know their own kind better and fight with them more readily."

The secretary of the Camp Committee showed me the workers' quarters and the various facilities maintained under the trade union. A thousand workers were employed on the dyke, he told me; the average wage was about $4.00 a day but the lowest unskilled labor got only $1.50. They had a club house, and a motion picture apparatus; a small permanent library of 500 volumes supplemented by traveling libraries

of 150 to 200 books sent by the Construction Workers Union from Samarkand. A drama circle of thirty members, a musical circle, a chess club, as well as political, military and sport circles, filled leisure time in the lonely camp on the desert. Not all was bliss, however, among the workers at Revat Hodja. As I entered one of the dormitories, a large Russian near the door rose and blocked my way. He was garrulous from a recent celebration.

"So you're an American," he said. "Well, what do you think of our bunk-houses? Fit for humans, are they?" He spat disgustedly. I glanced around. Sixty men in one enormous room certainly allowed no privacy. Yet each man had his own bunk, with a shelf and hook above it and a table beside it. There were no upper bunks, and the room was high and airy, the wooden floors well raised above the winter damp.

"Not much comfort," I admitted, "but I've seen worse in the lumber camps of America. . . ."

"You lie," he shouted, proceeding to inform me that all American workers had automobiles. Why not the Soviet workers? I remarked that since work on the dam was a temporary job, he could hardly

ask the taxpaying Uzbek peasants to furnish better quarters for the dyke workers than they themselves had permanently. "You're a hell of a delegate," he cried, disgustedly. The other men paid him no attention; they went on playing chess or reading.

Leaving the barracks I caught the last truck back to Samarkand. Passing along the line of the new canal, I saw on a tiny railroad a Fordson tractor, remodeled to act as locomotive, pulling twenty tons of trailing cars along the rails. Thus was cement delivered to line the new waterway. Not far beyond, among the trees by the road, a train of fifty camels had made camp for the night. The Kirghiz owners, nomads of the desert, were earning an honest rouble working for Revat Hodja. They too were delivering cement to the new canal. The old and the new transport were working side by side to reclaim the deserts of the East.

The Russians in Samarkand, however, found my enthusiasm a bit naïve. Not so easily do the old and new work together as it might seem to me, a stranger. They complained that Samarkand is hard to work in, that progress goes slowly. The hot Asian summer had tired them; they longed for Moscow,

craving perhaps some winter tonic needed by northern blood. They did not share my excitement over the picturesque life of the markets. The endless rows of old men, sipping their tea in *Chai-Khannas*, those open carpeted platforms along the streets where a man may squat and musingly contemplate all passing life without the labor of sharing it—were to these new crusaders no picturesque background but a positive obstacle—something to be removed that young life may flourish. "Those old men take their tea as seriously as one does the Revolution," complained one of the Russians to me.

When I mentioned the scores of new buildings, the six hundred thousand dollar hospital, the local representative of the newspaper *Pravda Vostoka* said grimly: "That hospital was supposed to open last May Day and again in October; now they say, but we do not believe, it will open in January. True, there are many workmen's dwellings finished; but we also know workers' houses, promised two years ago and still awaiting roofs. We know who is to blame; not lack of workmen or money but wasteful and bureaucratic planning and changing of plans.

Dead wood at the top. It is hard to get action, so far from the center."

And the local manager of the Debrolet airplane line said, more briefly: "It is easy to put up buildings from a state budget, but hard to transform a backward people." Yet the mere fact of his own existence—manager of airplanes in the capital of Tamerlane, was in itself an unnoticed revolution.

Impatient souls, destined never to be at peace in the war of changing worlds. Yet it is their impatience which is remaking in a brief generation the lands which were unchanging since long before the Crusades. They are too near the conquest to know its triumph.

*The Farm Hand*
*President*

## CHAPTER FIVE

ACHUN BABAIEF, president of the Uzbeks, a former farm laborer, is a man of great simplicity, popularity and wisdom. He rose to power through his work in the Ploughmen's Association. What Kalenin is to the Russian peasants, Achun Babaief is to the back country folk of Uzbekistan. In his hospitable home of six rooms, the White House of Samarkand, live himself and five members of his family, his secretary and four members of the latter's family, his bodyguard and all his peasant guests. Simple, illiterate Uzbeks, arriving at Samarkand after midnight (the popular hour for trains), walk to the president's home with their petitions and spend the rest of the night on his ample rugs. He goes on frequent tours among the villages, where newly unveiled women meet him with requests, and small boys run to stare, crying: "Grand-daddy Achun," and old men weep for joyous excitement to see in these strange modern days a man like themselves grown ruler.

I spent three days in Achun Babaief's home on my second visit to the city. I had been told to go straight to his house with my letter of introduction, "as all peasants do who come up from the country to see him." But I could not believe it proper to call on a president at three in the morning, which was the time my train arrived from Bokhara. The hotels, as expected, were full; but a night porter let me sit in his corridor till eight o'clock. Then I strolled down a shaded street of residences, till I reached the president's dwelling. The large bearded Uzbek policeman, who sleeps in the hall as body-guard and doorkeeper, told me that Achun Babaief was away in the country, but that I should wait two or three days in his home till his return. He reproached me mildly for not having come in the night time, saying: "Some one is always awake here, or at least I am asleep in the corridor. We could have given you a place on the sofa which would surely have been better."

The president's wife, a fat, kindly woman in a wrapper, with bare feet thrust into galoshes, came into the front room to greet me. She could not speak Russian but she smiled hospitably over the

head of her latest baby, who was nursing contentedly at her breast. Though she was very proud of her famous husband, and showed me his pictures taken at various eventful occasions, she was not very conversant with his movements. She was forced to refer to the secretary to know when he was likely to return from the country and what were his subsequent plans.

She invited me to breakfast with the family, which consisted of two other children and two old women, either relatives or family servants. Flat wheaten loaves and honey, raisins and nuts and grapes were set before us, with glasses of tea. For this delicious food no table utensils were visible, except one spoon in the honey jar. For the rest we used our fingers. After breakfast it was decided that I should lodge in the secretary's quarters, since he had a Russian wife and himself spoke Russian. For three days I shared a dining room with his mother-in-law, sleeping on a leather divan. On the second night the president came back from the "land reform," and arranged that we should go to the "Cotton Day" together.

Achun Babaief is "a communist." But surely communism means to his Asiatic soul something

simpler than the sophisticated theories of Marx. He reads Russian only with difficulty, and "Das Kapital" has not yet been translated into Uzbek. What is the meaning to him of this new faith which is transforming the fate of farmhands and had made him president in Samarkand? Two incidents come to my mind in explaining the soul of Achun Babaief.

The "land reform" which he had visited in the villages meant nothing more nor less than the confiscation of landlord's land and its division among farm hands and tenants. I asked him how it was going, and he nodded with placid satisfaction. There was no trace of apologetic explanation, no allegiance even by justification to any old ideal of private property in land. "Going very well," he said. "I was much pleased to see how well the farm hands organize, and what a big part they take in the land reform. They have uncovered many landlords not on the lists of the government." It was clear that the participation of the farm hands in governmental activities was the most important fact in the whole land confiscation to Achun Babaief. A new power was rising, and he was for it.

On a later occasion, during the celebration of

Cotton Day to which he took me, a wrinkled old peasant woman approached the president to beg amnesty for her son. How excited she was! She seized my hand as she waited. It was clear that the grandeur of the occasion almost outweighed the object of her petition. Ten years before, she was the bought chattel of a serf, sold in marriage to a peasant who might not pass the Emir's castle from a distance without dismounting from his cart. Now she was going to tell her family troubles to Granddaddy Achun, the president of her country.

Later Achun Babaief said to me: "I must look up her son. If he has not oppressed the poor or been grafting, he can no doubt be amnestied." In the president's mind this was the scale of crime. A man might steal from need or commit murder from passion; he might through ignorance be guilty of other crimes against the law. In all such cases there was still hope of making him a useful citizen. But he who exploited the poor or corrupted the government was quite simply rotten as a social being.

This was Achun Babaief's simple Asiatic interpretation of communism. It meant to him the awakening and organizing of farm hands and ten-

ants, and the division of land among those who used it. It meant the organization of the peasants into coöperatives, to produce cotton for a distant state trust in Moscow, and to receive goods from other state trusts in return. He who corrupted this machinery through which the farm hands were to rule and produce and earn their living, or he whose heart could find it possible to oppress the poor, was a useless person in the new day. His was the ultimately dangerous social crime, worse than murder.

The Cotton Day festival to which I was invited by the president was held on a Friday, since that is the Mohammedan holiday. At noon we gathered at the Samarkand railway station, bound for the Past Dorgomsky region. The festival itself is an odd mingling of modern economic propaganda with the ancient ritual of harvest. Modern European plows are given as prizes by the Cotton Trust for the best production. Modern, ultra modern, are the speeches. But very ancient is the crowd that assembles, on foot and on horse, the gnarled old peasantry from the surrounding villages. Ancient too in their favorite sport after the speeches are

over—the dangerous *kapkari*, a fight of horsemen over the flesh of a slaughtered lamb.

Many Samarkand officials beside the president went with us. For Past Dorgomsky is a special "experimental cotton region" where the Department of Agriculture has redistricted lands and supplied fertilizer as a model of what can be done by proper methods of farming. The gayest members of our crowd were sixty youths from the Musical High School of Samarkand. They had organized a "Blue Blouse Dramatic Group" and were going on invitation to perform at the festival. They wore long, padded coats, the national outdoor costume, but in this case of gorgeous hand-woven silk in many colors. Shining blue and green stripes predominated, but scarlet, crimson and yellow were not lacking. Large figured kerchiefs, of orange and yellow, folded diagonally and tied nattily about the waist, held the coats in position. Their caps were the common velvet skullcaps in many colors. Girls also participated, but less gorgeously, red silk kerchiefs being their chief decoration.

By mid-afternoon we arrived and poured from the

train into the waiting peasant crowd. They filled with their thousands a great dusty space near the tracks, covered the railway embankment, overflowed into the alleys and onto the roofs of the little town. In the midst of the crowd rose the tribune, a small platform built high in air for speakers—draped with the deep red rugs of Merv. Close before it a group of women sat on the ground or knelt to see better, unveiled women, huddling together and turning their backs towards the men but staring unabashed at the speaker's stand. White and old rose and purple and flowered material covered their heads in long draperies. The younger women stood nursing their babies openly, a proceeding which embarrassed them far less than the unveiling. Behind the women stood thousands of men and boys, with turbans, white, blue, striped, many-colored, above brown furrowed faces and flapping coats. Still behind were peasants on horseback who seemed never to dismount but watched the festival from their posts of vantage. Fine looking beasts were these horses, from the nomad strain of the high steppe.

From somewhere beyond the houses a procession kept coming, steadily enlarging the group around

the tribune. On the edge of the crowd two tractors decorated in red, dragged carts of shouting children up and down the square. These were the proud display of two *Kol-hozes*, collective groups of peasants farming land together. Thirty *Kol-hozes* in all were present, each with its red banner bearing the name and motto of the group. "Red Sickle," "Plowman," "Red Star," "Work-lovers," "New Day" were some of the names translated for me from the Arabic script in which they were written.

The speeches dragged along; the photographer of the Uzbek State Cinema climbed from roof to roof, taking pictures at every angle. At the close of each speech the band played the International, and all who were seated arose. All except the women. Whether they presumed on age or sex or whether they were so huddled on each other's laps that rising was difficult, they kept to the ground. Then suddenly, when the speeches were half over, I saw them preparing to rise. Swaying like a movement of the sea, the mass of women struggled to its feet, eyes uplifted in devotion. The younger women broke into cheers.

Shadiva was climbing into the tribune. Shadiva,

the miner's daughter from Fergana, member now of the Presidium in the new government of Samarkand. A woman like themselves, like them sold in marriage at the age of ten, whose rise to power was a symbol of their own freedom. The younger women gazed in aspiration, the older nodded in a gentle satisfaction. Only once again did the women honor any event by rising—when one of the local *Kol-hozes* presented a banner to "Grand-daddy Achun."

After the formal program, the peasants poured into a large open court where farm machinery was on display. Long lines of very cheap European plows waited to be given as prizes. One peasant, working his cotton land with ancient wooden stick, drawn by oxen, had by intensive labor produced four times the average cotton crop. Achun Babaief shook hands with him over the plow he received, congratulating him on his achievement. Several others had honorable records to brag of. Premiums of four hundred roubles went to the best *Kol-hozes*. But alas, the expensive machinery, like tractors, was only for exhibition. The sign of the local branch of the State Savings Bank, hung over a crude wooden

door in the mud wall, indicated the way to secure them. But it was quite clear that no individual peasant in even this exhibition region could save enough by himself to buy a tractor. Only a *Kol-hoz* of twenty or thirty families, working and saving together, could amass the sums needed.

The feast had already begun in another court near the railway station. On the hard earth sat several hundred turbaned and gayly clad peasants, ranged in long ovals of twenty or thirty persons around central mats on which were steaming bowls of *plof*. This dish of hot rice, cooked with pieces of meat and fat, is the national dish of Central Asia. Like the black bread of the Russian peasant, it is the beginning, middle and end of every meal. It is eaten with the fingers; the twenty or thirty peasants in each oval formation dipped eagerly out of one enormous central bowl. Near the entrance to the court a guard held back other hordes, waiting till their turn at the *plof* should come.

It was late afternoon. I had not eaten since early morning. I began to wonder when I also might be given my *plof*. One of the guards, remembering that I had come with the president's party, led me

across the railway square to the new school-house, on the floor of which the city guests were also eating *plof* with some additional fixings. Strips of felt had been placed to sit on; worn Oriental rugs held the dishes of food. Achun Babaief nodded to me to take my seat beside him. In recognition of my western habits, he placed in front of me a flat wheaten loaf to serve as plate, and called for a spoon. I helped myself to a plentiful loaf-ful of *plof* with a side garnish of delicious stewed lamb. Later, one corner of the loaf did duty as a dish for the honey which ended the feast. Throughout the banquet, a dozen common tea bowls, symbol of fellowship, passed from mouth to mouth.

It was dusk when the feasting ended; there was barely time to view the last of the *kap-kari* which took place outside the town in a large open field. In this cherished Asiatic sport a lamb is killed and its body thrown into the air to be contended for by horsemen. Madly straining, racing, fighting, neither horse nor man is spared in the struggle, which often ends in serious and even fatal injuries. Clouds of dust obscured the conflict so that the spectators could see little of it except the victors emerging in tri-

*President Achun Babaief at a Land Reform Meeting*

umph. For the sake of the *kap-kari* the peasant breeds fine horses. In horses he prizes strength and speed rather than capacity for ploughing, for which he is more apt to use oxen.

The entertainment given by the youths and maidens of the Musical High School attracted as great a crowd as the *kap-kari*. On the hard earth of the railway square was laid a large canvas; on this the musicians grouped themselves with their instruments and began a program of topical songs and dances. The melodies were old—the monotonous music of Central Asia, often tiresome to a European. But the type of performance, with its mingling of dance, dramatic dialogue and satire was modern. The subjects chosen dealt with the latest events—humorous comment on politics, on government foibles, on social customs, conveyed in simple couplets in the form of question and answer.

Ali Ardabus, director of the High School, sat at my side and translated the songs, which were often the invention of the boys themselves. To fit himself for his work in Central Asia, Ali Ardabus studied many years in Moscow with Mordvin, then took a course in music and dancing in Tiflis, learning the

Dalcroix system of rhythm, the Isadora Duncan method of improvisation, the Plastic Dancing of the Orient, and the new "biomechanical figures," a Soviet invention whereby movements of factory and modern farming are reduced to dance-rhythms. With this equipment, he was creating a new form of music and dancing for the Uzbek nation; his pupils would perform for peasants or teach village schools. It was the intention, he told me, to use old motifs but inject into them the vivid life of the present day.

The songs were very simple, with strong rhythm, performed by couples or small groups. A youth and maiden face each other, raising arms above head and emphasizing each line with movements:

"Where, O where is the maiden?
Where, O where is the maiden?" . . .

"Here, O here is the maiden.
Here, O here is the maiden." . . .

"You are given as bride to an old man,
Who offers a fine rich kalym (bride money)" . . .

"I won't marry an old man,
And kalym is now forbidden." . . .

"Who then will marry the maiden?
Who then will marry the maiden?" . . .

"I will marry a Comsomoletz,
I will marry a Comsomoletz (young Communist
and very modern)." . . .

In contrast followed a peasant chant, in a chorus of male voices, simply descriptive of pastoral life:

"The lambs go in great droves;
Each leaves his traces.
The lambs go in great droves,
Like an army."

In this stanza the Central Asian, accustomed to symbolism, sees not merely the pastoral picture but also the mighty movement of a new peasantry, hitherto lamblike and submissive.

There followed many personal satires. A boy and a girl faced each other, with hands upraised and bodies swaying and attacked each other thus:

"On your head you carry
A full-laden basket;
Inside your head
It is empty. . . .

"On your face you have
Powder and colors;

Behind your face there is
Nothingness."

The unveiling of women was the theme of many songs, some pure propaganda, some tragic, some humorous. Of the first type was a dialogue between a *mullah* and his daughter, in which he offers her fine silk veils, so that she may not leave her ancient custom; she answers that she prefers education; he bewails the fact that when you once let a girl learn even her "A B C's" you never can tell where it will end.

One of the most delightful songs on women, which caused hearty laughter, told how the wife of a poor workman unveiled, and then demanded that her husband buy her a fine silk shawl and kerchief, "since I am now completely European." The husband replied that he had no money, whereupon the woman threatened to report him to the police for counter-revolution, since he interfered with the fight for women's unveiling.

Some of the most popular songs dealt with bureaucracy and their relation to the peasants. There were many of these. One series began: "What is

the matter with Samarkand?"—various answers being given according to the singer. One version was:

"What is the matter with Samarkand?
See there the bureaucrat!
He carries a proletarian portfolio,
But take an X-ray, see what's inside.

"He comes to the baths;
He takes out a gold ring and silk shirt;
Out of his proletarian portfolio.
What use are these to the workers?

"Perhaps he even has in it
Sixty poods of papers,
Documents, reports, resolutions,
All of no practical importance."

In another song the bureaucrat himself sings that he carries a proletarian portfolio:

"But when a *dekkan* (peasant) comes to me,
I look on him like cotton seed oil,"

an allusion to the very poor substitute for butter known to cotton-growers. In still another song of the same type the peasant comes to Samarkand to call on his representative, and finds him always "in

conference." In each stanza he returns at a different hour, at last ending:

> "While you are holding your conferences
> I am going to die."

Most pungent of all was a satire on the Department of Health:

> "We have in our town a Health Department;
> They protect hygiene;
> They look at our town from a high tree,
> And spit thrice upon it."

Night came. The musical program ended. On a great sheet stretched across the square began the motion pictures. Though they were held in the open air and free to all, the crowd was so dense that I could not get near enough to see them. Suddenly a train whistle blew and our party from Samarkand hastened into the single third-class car attached for our benefit to the local freight. The musicians in gay silken costumes, not content with such sociable crowding as might be attained in two dimensions, flowed upward into the sleeping and baggage shelves of the car. Two or three curled on each middle

shelf, designed for one sleeper; one or two lay flat on the baggage shelves, wedged close to the ceiling, sticking their heads over to join in the music.

In the flickering light of a single candle to each compartment (this being an ancient car quite lacking improvements), the three-tiered crowd of happy brown faces broke into song. They got out instruments, the many varieties of strange stringed instruments of the Uzbeks. In the corridor a tiny space was cleared for dancers; one by one the youths and girls took positions, performing some dancing chant while the crowd kept time with hand-claps. The black-bearded Uzbek policeman, body-guard of the president, was pressed into service as a dancer. Every one laughed and clapped. The best performers on every kind of instrument were called for, to make the night merry as we rolled back to Samarkand.

Achun Babaief, president of the Uzbeks, leaned against a corner of the compartment, nodding his head and waving his hands in time to the music. Once he joined in a song he knew; again he called for a favorite song and the boys made haste to sing

it. What he had asked for was an old love song of the Uzbeks, from long before the days of revolution, in which a lover chants the charms of his far unattainable sweetheart. So we came back under the starry sky with tireless song to the noisy railway station of the capital that once was Tamerlane's.

*The Profane Invasion*
*of Holy Bokhara*

## CHAPTER SIX

THE cities of Central Asia have each their endearing adjectives, without which it would be crude to mention their names. Fergana is "empearled Fergana," circled as she is by white-balled fields of cotton. Shakhri-Sabs, birthplace of Tamerlane, and to-day the hot center of land confiscation, is "Town of Beauty." Samarkand is always "the Ancient," or else "green-curled Samarkand," an allusion to the trees of her irrigated district. But Bokhara has three adjectives: "high, holy, divinely descended Bokhara."

It is also said of the cities in an ancient verse: "Samarkand is a jewel on the face of this earth, but Bokhara is the heart of Islam." And again the proverb runs: "Whoever says Bokhara's walls are not straight, he is cast out of God."

Such was the reverence once offered to that holiest stronghold of the faith. I trudged into the holy city one dusty morning in November to report the profane invasion of the years just past. Bokhara has

a new reputation since the Emir fell to the Soviet Republic. Its women unveiled themselves last year more spectacularly and with more attendant murders than in any other district. No longer a sacred city is Soviet Bokhara; not at all, nor a clean one, but godliness never had any relation to cleanliness, anywhere in the East. The streets of Old Bokhara, through which I passed that morning, were narrow alleys of thick dust which the winter rains change to heavy mud. There have, it is true, been notable street improvements in the passionate modernization of Soviet days. Rough cobbles have been laid in the main bazaar streets, and where it used to be necessary to traverse their deep mud on horseback one can now walk, if one is not too finicky, even in the spring. The few pale electric lights, which spread a dim dusk in the crooked alleys, are not unlike altar candles in a new Soviet religion of electrification. They were turned on for the first time amid appropriate ceremonies, while women shrieked and sophisticated men applauded. They brought an immediate decrease in the picturesque night murders for which the city was famous. I learned also that the Institute of Tropical Medicine, a new institution,

has drained the malarial swamps once permanent within the very walls of the city, offering to Bokhara's dwellers a sure way to that paradise from which the city itself is divinely descended. . . . No western newcomer, however, not knowing of the city's past, could imagine that Bokhara had ever been any dirtier than now.

Filthy to-day, as always, Bokhara is still dotted with many ancient holy mosques and *medresses* to which aspiring students came from the plains of Kazakstan or the irrigated lands of the Uzbeks to study the Koran. Formerly no Jew was permitted to ride in its streets. He might be a millionaire merchant, and rumor made all Bokharan Jews wealthy and famous merchants, but Bokharan dust and mud he might not escape even by sitting on a donkey; he was made to go afoot wearing around his middle a strand of rough rope, in token of slavery. To-day, Jew and Mussulman, Russian and Uzbek, are citizens equally in the streets of the city. Only the merchant and the clergy are downtrodden—they who once made the old fame and tyranny of Bokhara.

As I passed through narrow dusty alleys from

the massive gate which once was shut at sundown (it is now open continuously for the autobus line to Kagan), the high, unwindowed earthen walls behind which lay the homes of the Uzbeks, with their separate quarters for men and women—began to be broken at the base by shop fronts. Sellers of meat, bread, rugs, silks, silver, sat on carpeted floors a little above street level and invited would-be buyers to sit also, quaff tea and begin bargaining. Shopping in the East is a leisurely pastime. Between the stalls walked the Bokharan water-carriers bearing large goatskins filled with water, from the necks of which they expertly expelled a scattering shower to lay the dust of the streets. I smiled when some one told me later that the profane invaders had put all these water-carriers into trade unions, with working clothes and vacations on pay provided by the householders who employ them.

As the alleys opened into a dusty square I beheld the source of the water—the Holy Pool, surrounded by mosques and *medresses* and tea-houses, with stone steps on all four sides down which the water-carriers trudge to fill their goatskins. There are other pools in Bokhara visible through stone archways,

some dark, some sunlit but all of them stagnant. The Holy Pool, also unmoving, is the largest, the "Father of Waters." It is brought by ditches from the distant river to serve as drink for the Bokharans. Boiling it for tea was insufficient to disguise its taste; only strong coffee made it drinkable and after such coffee I always had indigestion.

One change only has the profane invasion yet made in Bokhara's water system. The Institute of Tropical Medicine, an admirable institution dating from 1924, has forbidden the water-carriers to enter the pool in bare feet, and thus bringing under control a parasitic worm which burrowed in long curls under the skins of the city's dwellers and was carried by the water. The water-carriers still walk into the pool, but they now wear shoes. Thus civilization advances! Other changes loom. A new water-works, hailed as a modern triumph, is under way. Lest unthinking Westerners envisage actual water pipes laid in dwellings, let me explain that the water will be delivered in tanks in three parts of the city. There will be no resultant unemployment of water-carriers.

But neither the water, which gives one indigestion,

nor the bare hotel room which lacked even this water to wash with, sending me to a common bucket on the veranda of the court; nor yet the dust which arose in special clouds when the city's cattle came home at evening, and lay like a London fog obscuring the sunset—none of these things could prevent Bokhara from being a constant thrill of joy. Here is the most colorful bazaar of Central Asia, running for miles under covered streets. Every corner, every shop front is crowded with gorgeous pictures; old bearded Abrahams and Noahs from the Sunday school cards haggling over ancient silks, roasting succulent mutton over open fires, preparing hot meat-filled crusts so savory and crisp and odorous that one could but eat. From deep in the shops came the sound of music, monotonous throb of tambourine and *baraband*, the wailing of a dozen stringed instruments in native strains not to be reduced to European notes. The method of writing this music was lost five hundred years ago but has lately been revived from ancient inscriptions. The melodies themselves have passed from musician to musician through the ages, and the Central Asians are so devoted to them that they sit even in the dust

of the streets with their backs against shop fronts and their legs thrust out under the passing donkeys, thrumming contemplatively.

To-day, however, in the very midst of the amusing donkeys and their serious human freight, in the swirl of camels, under the very shadow of the Tower of Death whence former emirs cast enemies to death in the market place—everywhere in Bokhara are signs of a new and unholy invasion which makes no truce with the picturesque life of bazaar and *medresse* and Holy Pool. Across its waters I could see a great red banner waving "Welcome to the Regional Congress of Trade-Unions." Beneath the sign was a large club room with ugly instructive placards about tuberculosis, the industrial loan, the unveiling of women, venereal diseases—everything at once that is new and scientific. On the floor above is a crowded cinema, displaying a feature film made in old Tashkent by the Uzbekistan State Motion Pictures—"The Second Wife"—a propaganda tragedy of polygamous marriage. I visit the film and enjoy its picturesque Uzbek interiors but conclude that Central Asian audiences painfully resemble the Russians at least in this—they can take their tragedy

undiluted for three hours. This club house and theater are housed in a former religious academy.

Many other old *medresses* have been turned to secular uses. Above one I note: "Dormitory of Construction Workers Union"; above another, "Peoples' Club and Red Tea House." The largest *medresse* of all, overlooking the Holy Pool, is being remodeled for a Women's Club—what greater profanation than this, for women to meet here in public. Into still another, I come by chance, to witness what may have been the legal death of the last religious academy of Bokhara.

A pale-faced clerk, local representative of the "Committee on Ancient Monuments," faces a group of sullen swarthy sons of Allah, Kazaks from the desert, Kirghiz from the eastern steppe, who have come to enter a course of religious study announced to reopen after many years' interruption by war and famine, in the most holy *medresse* Mir-Arab, the favored *medresse* of the deposed Emir. It is clearly an attempt of the Mohammedan clergy to try out the Soviet Government, and many predict that they will succeed. "Have we not religious freedom and are these not adult students?" The young clerk of

the Committee on Ancient Monuments announces, however, as he refers to his large black ledger, that all rooms in the *medresse* have been assigned to other uses and that none are available for residence. Thus neatly he cuts the ground under their expectations, without the slightest mention of religion, though all know his reason quite well. They make no loud protests, though any one of the desert sons could have felled the slight clerk with a hand touch. They only stare bitterly and file out.

"They will protest," says the clerk wearily, "to the government at Samarkand."

"And what will be the outcome?" I ask him.

"How do I know?" he answers. "I merely obey orders."

"To what extent does the local population support you?" I ask, curious.

"Hard to tell," he confesses. "I think they are indifferent to the clergy."

"And if the clergy try to arouse them against you?"

"They did try," he answers briefly. "It was liquidated."

He alluded, of course, to the Bashmach move-

ment, the "Holy War" against Bolsheviks, last and most persistent of all the armed attacks on the Soviet Union. It sprang up when the Emir of Bokhara fell; given form by Enver Pasha's political disappointments and by the military-religious ambition of Ibrahim, a would-be Genghis Khan of the hill tribes. Though beaten as an important foe in 1924, it dragged its way through bandit raids for two more years and echoes still in occasional murders of unveiled women and young communists in remote villages.

The late and unlamented Emir of Bokhara, who still lives, it is said, as a wholesale caracul merchant in Kabul, was one of the last of the theocratic despots who once ruled all of Central Asia. Since godliness in the East is unrelated not only to cleanliness but even to mere morality, the Emir maintained not only his regular harem of a hundred wives more or less coming and going, but a more favored harem of comely boys. Both harems were filled by presents of sons and daughters from persons anxious for his Highness' favor and applicants for office.

The Emir's officials had both civil and religious authority; the courts were church courts, with the

Koran as law code, interpreted by those in power. The schools were church schools in which small boys squatted on rugs to recite the Koran, by rote in an alien language. In its treatment of Jews, and peasants and workers, Old Bokhara was the early Middle Ages. Not even the industrial capitalism of Russia had touched it. The first factory in the city is a silk mill opened in 1928, by the Soviet Government.

The tale of the Emir's fall and flight and of the Holy War thereafter has passed into legend, cunningly embroidered by all the Eastern tellers of tales. My version comes from the Emir's adjutant via an Armenian journalist, and I do not guarantee anything except its picturesqueness. It may quite well be true; it carries the flavor of ancient Asia and contradicts no facts elsewhere reported.

In 1920, when the revolutionists set fire to the castle, said my informant, Emir Said-Alim-Bakhadur-Khan fled away to the hills of Eastern Bokhara, now the Republic of the Tadjiks. He left his wives to the number of a hundred, but took a few of his best loved boys, who could travel faster and pleased him better. With him went also three thousand of his clergy officials. The Uzbeks through whose ter-

ritory he passed had been heavily taxed and hated the Emir, so they systematically stole baggage and killed stragglers. And a whisper ran through all the people that "Emir Said-Alim rides covered with black dust"—omen of death or ultimate disaster.

From time to time, at weary stopping places, the Emir got out his English letter of credit, indicating that fifty-four million gold roubles cannily deposited by his father in London were still available. He remarked dismally: "If England doesn't pay, there is no hope even in the next world." To recoup immediate finances, since the London banks were very distant, the Emir sold high titles, a method which grew more effective as he neared Duschambe, by the borders of Afghanistan, where the people are especially pious.

Weary with his journey, Emir Said-Alim desired to rest awhile with Avliakul-Bek, high official of his own creation. To refuse hospitality is a thing not done in the East. But Avliakul, mindful of the high cost of entertaining an emir for any length of time, whispered abroad the rumor that the Reds were close behind in the hills. Emir Said-Alim hurried on. At Duschambe he was well received, and rested

many weeks to replenish his harem with girls brought as presents from the country-side.

More adequate means of financing his campaigns now occurred to the Emir. There were in Duschambe many wealthy Jewish merchants of Bokhara. The Emir accused them of bringing the Bolsheviks into the land. He beheaded them and took their fortunes. Thus he acquired sixty *lakhs* of silver, three-quarters of a million dollars. The deceitfulness of Avliakul became apparent when a reconnoitering party found no trace of the Reds in the hills. So the Emir beheaded Avliakul also, annexing twenty-five *lakhs* of silver and the deceiver's bevy of wives.

Worthy the Arabian Nights is the tale of Ibrahim, who rose from the post of bandit chief among the Lokei tribes, to be Commander of the Holy War against the Reds. Ibrahim it was whose daring raid through the hills in search of Bolsheviks first revealed the astounding deceitfulness of Avliakul. For this service the Emir wished to ennoble the young chieftain, and searching for a post which demanded the least book learning, since Ibrahim was illiterate, he fixed upon the title "Keeper of the

Royal Stables." To this, however, the Emir's advisers objected, saying that Ibrahim was by profession a horse thief, and to give him such a post would rouse mirth in all Islam. Thereupon the Lokei tribe, to which Ibrahim belonged, declared their tribal honor attacked. Were they not all professional horse thieves, and honorable followers of the prophet? The matter was settled; the too conservative city-bred advisers were discarded. In the settlement, Ibrahim got the job and rose from one post of honor to another, especially after the Emir himself left the discomforts of the hills to take up residence in Kabul.

Many are the tales of Ibrahim, this young brigand of the hill tribes. Of his love for Dona Gul (the Unique Rose), a wealthy widow, how she disdained to marry a horse thief, but answered his entreaties: "Come to me when you are Bek, and I will marry you." Of how he sent for Dona Gul on the day when forty thousand horsemen paraded before him, one thousand armed with rifles, and the rest with mountain weapons—and married thus the bride of his choice who is still his one wife in Afghanistan,

for the men of the mountains are not like the city emirs.

Of how he dealt with Enver Pasha, that famous Turk, who tried to use the Bolshevik Congress of Eastern Peoples in Baku for a Pan-Turk movement, and being rebuked by Zinoviev fled away into Central Asia to organize a Holy War against Moscow. Enver was armed with the holiest relics of Moslem tradition, but his outward form was too European for the mountain warriors. So Ibrahim feigned to believe him an impostor, imprisoned him in a cave, with a watermelon rind as his only drinking cup. When the Emir heard this in far Kabul he wrote a sharp letter: "To the Lokei Tribe and all known and unknown thieves."

While yet the messengers were some days from his stronghold, news of the letter reached Ibrahim by the secret telegraphy of the hills. He set free Enver and made excuses, and secured from the Turk a signed paper that he had been treated with all courtesy. When the Emir's envoys arrived with their letter of denouncement, Ibrahim replied calmly: "My lord the Emir is deceived; no one has arrested Enver Pasha; lo, here he sits in honor!" And Enver

himself sat silent, still hoping to unite all forces and lead the Holy War.

It was no part of Ibrahim's plans that Enver should be leader, so he undermined him by the craft of the hills, teasing him into difficult positions where the Bolsheviks beat him and his authority grew pale. One day Enver Pasha was killed by chance in an encounter with a Bolshevik reconnoitering party and lay many days dead before it was known that he was Enver. Then the Red soldier who had stolen the shirt from the dead body, found in its pocket a gold-bound Koran, sacred gift from the sultan. So was the death of the famous leader discovered. After Enver's death, Ibrahim secured the title *Ghazi*, Commander of the Holy War, and kept it till the people, weary of strife, forsook him, and he, too, took the road to Afghanistan.

This was the tale of the Emir's fall and the Holy War—a tale of an ancient Asia that has vanished in four years' time so completely that its high priests obey the low voiced order of a pale clerk in charge of Ancient Monuments, and disperse the last of their religious schools.

The modern voices in Old Bokhara are startlingly

different. In the city palace of Emir Said-Alim, a hideous fortress shattered by bombardment, I saw in the rooms above the ancient dungeons the secretary of the Regional Executive Committee receiving delegations of peasant women, who came unveiled bringing petitions. In the worn stone halls were Anti-Tuberculosis posters, placards of the State Fire Insurance, of the State Savings Bank, of the Coöperatives, agricultural placards proclaiming the benefits of tractors, village libraries and sanitary stations. The People's house of Old Bokhara advertised a benefit opera "for the funds of the United Red Cross and Red Crescent." Another poster in red showed a gigantic workman and peasant standing guard over a factory and a university—twin shrines of the new régime.

Among the picturesque shop fronts and the haggling Abrahams and Noahs, are the signs of the Workers' Coöperatives, of the Uzbek State Trading Company, of the branches of the State Savings Bank. I note on an ancient arched door the sign of the "Gusar Peoples Library," and know that the inhabitants of this street, or "Gusar," have established a library of their own. How many of them, one

wonders, could read four years ago? In the large shop of the Government Publishing House below my hotel, I can even buy typewriter ribbons for my Corona.

And yet, in spite of the new industry and much saving of life by health campaigns, the population of Holy Bokhara decreases. Not by death but by emigration. Once a trading town and a sacred capital, it is now a mere regional center under a government which believes neither in God nor in private trade. The clergy have moved away to more and more distant villages, high renowned *mudarisses*, contenting themselves with the post of lowly rural *mullahs*, where they may still denounce the accursed Bolsheviks and levy tribute from believers. Yet into the hills the profane invasion pursues them; the radio and the movie find them out. Though drama and photography are anathema to all good Moslems, the traveling cinema has a wild success in the villages. A new proverb says: "Curses are without charm against the Movies."

Competing with the old *Chai-Khannas* of Bokhara, where the tea devotees squat forever in genial converse, and motionless, contemplate the march of

empty time, there arise "Red *Chai-Khannas*" filled with placards and statues of Lenin. Is it possible that the East may lose its leisure, and drink its tea with one lump or two of propaganda? In the rooms above the tea houses are classes in the Latinized Alphabet, in Marx and in stenography! The young musicians of the Uzbeks, even as they scoff at European tunes, are humming new songs to the ancient melodies—songs in praise of the factory!

As the *mullahs* and *muezzins* have fallen on evil days, so have the once famed traders of the city. For all its gorgeous color, the ancient bazaar is not so wealthy as once in rugs and silver and silks; as a would-be purchaser I even found it shabby. The local merchants sadly bewailed its decline, blaming the rise of village coöperatives, which have carried trade out of the towns to the rural districts. A one time millionaire, introduced to me as "a very famous merchant of former days," hastened to disclaim the title. He substituted for it, "a former revolutionist"; very typical this of the evil repute that has come upon private traders. Can even the centuries old bazaar of divinely descended Bokhara prove mortal?

*Problems of Local Government*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

IF the profane invasion of modernism seems secure in the cities, not so in the rural districts. Continuous stories of conflict pour in from distant villages and are printed in the *Pravda Vostoka*, stories of how old Asia circumvents the Bolsheviks. The tale of the village of Garash passes from mouth to mouth in the *Chai-Khannas*, amid laughter. "Did you know that Garash had a sheep as president of its village Soviet? Yes, actually, a sheep! It happened in this wise." And the raconteurs continue.

"The village of Garash, as every one knows, is a very holy place. All its dwellers are descended from "The relatives of the Prophet Mohammed." All of them, all, have been to Mecca and wear the white turban of the pilgrim. The village grows in these days, for the *mullahs* and high *ishans* are leaving the cities, where there is no shelter from the laws of the infidels, and they take their refuge in loyal villages like Garash. There they can curse

Bolsheviks as loudly as they list, and the sound dies ere it reaches the ears of the city.

"There came, however, once even to the distant village of Garash, an organizer from the Bolsheviks, to tell them how to elect a village president and send delegates to the Congress of Soviets. The crier went through the bazaar, shouting: 'Hear, all ye holy ones, an organizer comes who wishes to speak with the holy ones. All be this afternoon at the mosque of Hanak.'

"They gathered. The organizer talked for an hour and nobody understood at all. Then the interpreter talked for two hours and they understood little more. But they did gather that the days of the Basmachi were over and that they must choose a new 'White Beard,' or head man, for the village. Only not a *mullah* nor *ishan* nor any religious person. For the new government has nothing to do with religion.

"Every one kept quiet. What was Garash to do? Every one in Garash was holy. Always in the past they chose the most reverend *mullah* for their 'White Beard.' What government could there be but that

of priests; had not the *mullahs* managed the schools and courts and governments for centuries?

"Then a shrewd *mullah* arose and said: 'Mussulmans! God is great! I nominate as "White Beard" Abdullah the Sheep. And since he can neither read nor write, he shall have as secretary Mirza Chala.' " . . . Abdullah was a pet lamb in one of the holy households; Mirza Chala was a shrewd fanatic. The tale told in bazaars and *Chai-Khannas* describes the many exploits of the sheep who was president, his gain in weight, the color and price of his fleece at the shearing, and how in the end his devoted subjects killed him and ate him, cannibal-like, at a winter feast! The tale was famous and laughter was loud on the Bolsheviks."

The Bolsheviks heard and forthwith sent an enquirer to the faraway village of Garash. True, he learned, that a sheep had been elected as president to make sport of the government. But not for such a case can a high court proceed, without losing face. He listened and dug and watched for more dignified pretexts for action. A holy *ishan*, whose wife was late in bringing his tea, poured a cauldron of

boiling water over her head, and gave her, when his wrath had cooled, no medical treatment, only prayers and charms. When at last her flesh grew maggoty, the unfortunate creature was sent to a Soviet clinic in the township center. The horrid facts came out. The *ishan* was arrested. The young wife of another *ishan* had been buried not long before. The day before her funeral, despairing shrieks were heard by the neighbors. The new investigator brought this case also to court.

The secretary of the village Soviet had two wives; so had the president of the coöperative. Members of the Soviet were still taking girls of twelve years in marriage, openly, with a feast and the favorite sport of *kapkari*, in which horsemen contend for the flesh of a slaughtered lamb. In the village coöperative, established with Soviet aid so that the poor might buy goods at low cost, all the local holy men held five or six tickets. When tea was scarce and rationed, they bought it up on their many membership books, and cornered the market; then, when poor peasants came on trading days from thirty miles away to make their purchases, tea was only to be found at high prices in private booths owned

by these same holy men. . . . The investigator added cases of graft to law breaking on many counts; the village of Garash was marked for a clean-up in the higher courts.

In the struggle of ancient Asia against new laws and customs, strength counts, but shrewdness more. Not often do the *mullahs* openly defy the central authorities, as they did in Garash. More often they try to join the victors, as the East has always done. The higher and lower clergy and even the former officials of the Emir of Bokhara, who at first fought the new power with armed might, came over swiftly to the Bolsheviks when the game was lost, and tried to bore from within. *Mullahs* became presidents of village Soviets, managers of coöperatives; when possible, they even joined the Communist Party, which is devoted to militant atheism. They intended still to rule.

The peasants of Jengili village fear to speak of Mullah Yusef, the president of their Soviet. They whisper that Mullah Yusef is a "big man." All the officialdom of Hojent, the big district center, are "his people." It is not well to antagonize the *mullah;* even the new Soviet laws, it seems, have a

way of serving him. Has he not held his post, even under the infidels, for three long years?

The methods of Mullah Yusef are very ancient, though the government agencies through which he works are very new. Three horses of herdsman Hujamkul were insured by the new state insurance, and although the premiums were alluringly high, not one of the horses perished. What waste of good money that because of the health of three horses a premium should be uncollected! Mullah Yusef was against waste, so he collected the premium. Not for Hujamkul, but for himself, making the affidavit in the illiterate Hujamkul's name. When the herdsman heard of the money collected by Yusef, he came to protest—some say to demand his share.

"Your horses are still healthy," cried the surprised and delighted Yusef. "Let me congratulate you! Give thanks to Allah and say no more. The rest does not concern you." The herdsman Hujamkul went away, scratching his head.

Later when Hujamkul was gone to the hills, the *mullah* "borrowed" his three best lambs from his flock and roasted them at a feast. Hujamkul was really annoyed! He demanded payment—the

lambs were worth at least thirty-five roubles a head. Indeed, agreed Yusef, they were lambs worthy of a price! But payment!

"Ungrateful creature! Did not my prayers save your horses from the death threatened by the State Insurance? But wait!—I will tell the Financial Inspection that you are no herdsman but a buyer and seller of cattle, a continual trader. Then the taxes will squeeze you as the cotton-seeds are squeezed in the oil press!" Mullah Yusef had mastered the laws of the Soviets, which tax trade very highly but favor the poor herdsman. Hujamkul knew that much—he withdrew his protests.

Marriage and divorce cost nothing at the Soviet registration bureaus, but Mullah Yusef charges ten roubles for each. When a certain peasant sought to save money by registering his marriage at the higher district office instead of the village, President Yusef made a scandal, and declared the wedding illegal. Not till the ten roubles had been duly paid was the village Jengili instructed to regard the union respectable. Even the new civil marriage laws are grist to the mill of the Mullah Yusef.

Mullah Yusef is not an isolated example. Other

Mohammedan *mullahs* have risen to office in Soviet Turkestan. The communists look with disfavor on all religion, but where is their power to reach the distant village, where *mullahs* always have ruled and sometimes rule to-day? It is not enough to give the villagers the vote under the new laws. It would be a doughty peasant indeed who would raise his voice in village elections against Mullah Yusef, or another as well entrenched. Only widespread organization and agitation can raise up forces to overthrow them. This agitation [1] goes on; sometimes it succeeds, sometimes, not.

Near Old Bokhara, in the village of Charda, another *mullah* is president of the village Soviet. When the peasants asked for aid against a pest of grasshoppers, he answered: "Grasshoppers are a punishment sent by God. To fight against them is useless. Bow down to Allah, pray to him. . . ." And this in the face of scores of new agricultural experts sent out by the Cotton Committee and the Department of Agriculture. And despite the fact that twenty-two mosques have been turned into clubs and

[1] See following chapter: Class War in the Villages, for a fuller description of the methods employed.

social centers by vote of the local population in the same district of Old Bokhara, and one a Women's Club!

The communist press of Central Asia rings with appeals to "organize locally," to "clean out these alien elements from our ranks," to take the local governments out of the hands of the *mullahs* and the former officialdom. They meet with much success in this direction. Peasants, farm laborers, even women, get elected to office. But once in office, what models are there to show them how to govern? What form of rule have they ever known? Only the old ways of the East, which they use less adroitly and more roughly than the *mullahs*.

The village of Sufi was electing its water controller. It is he who has charge of letting the irrigation water into the fields of each peasant in turn. Obviously, an important official whose favor may give ruin or riches. A group of peasants put up one man for the office, but the secretary of the local communist group put up another, and ostentatiously wrote down in a book the names of all who opposed him. The hint was enough; the secretary's candidate was elected. In the autumn the peasants said

of him: "He came to our village; he was thin and now he is fat."

The grain collectors in a certain region near Khiva had been told by the regional Grain Trust to buy an amount of grain at a given price. They were "high-pressure buyers," not unlike the "high-pressure salesmen" of America, with orders to accomplish their task or quit. Somebody had blundered; the region was poor and barren. None the less the collectors informed each peasant, with appropriate pressure, how much grain they expected from him and at what terms. In the village Halimba one peasant sold his horse to buy the grain he had been forced to "contract" to sell; another sold his last ox; another gave his seed grain and the land remained unsown. In the village of Hatam a peasant sold the seed which he had just received as a loan from the Department of Agriculture; another was arrested for not fulfilling his "contract," and his mother journeyed to town to buy the necessary grain from private dealers so that he might sell it again in fulfillment of his promise to the grain collectors.

When the news of such cruel nonsense reached the higher authorities in Tashkent, clean-ups and prose-

cutions followed. It became clear finally that somewhere, high up, was a government which did not wish to antagonize peasants. It was equally clear that the local officials had no such scruples, but were bent only on satisfying their immediate superiors, in doing which they practiced the ancient tricks of despotism. Still, *is* an inspector to believe naïvely all the peasants tell him about crop failures, when these peasants have been used to cheating governments for a thousand years? The clear path between violence and weak credulity is not so simple after all. How shall a newly made Uzbek official, only recently become literate, find the clear way?

Certainly Police Inspector Rachimov did not believe in trusting the peasants. In the winter of 1927, the villagers of the Penzikent region appealed for help against a robber band from the hills. The regional authorities sent Rachimov with a few armed men to help them. Instead of wasting his energies going into the hills for bandits, Rachimov adopted one of the ancient labor-saving devices of Asia (not unknown in more modern lands). He rounded up the local peasants and ordered them to produce the bandits. The terror-stricken villagers protested that

they knew nothing of the whereabouts of the criminals. Rachimov resorted to beatings and torture. He placed cartridges between men's fingers and then struck the hands together violently so that the joints were swollen for weeks thereafter.

In all this, Rachimov but followed time-honored methods of police investigation, believing, or choosing to believe, that the peasants had concealed weapons and knew the movements of the bandits or perhaps even joined them on occasion. Who shall say that he had no foundation for this belief? Whole villages in Asia exist where peaceful plowing half the week follows the more profitable trade of occasional robbery. In this case, under the terror of torture, the peasants dispersed to the hills, half-naked and without arms invading the snowy mountain passes to hunt the bandits, or perhaps to warn them. Who knows which? Who will ever know? Meantime Rachimov "sat pretty" in command of the village, compelling all to obey his slightest order. He ordered provisions for his troops and a new cap for himself, and did not pay for them. . . . Each of these turns the peasants stored up in unforgiving minds and reported later. . . .

Whispered complaints of Rachimov leaked to higher authorities. Whereupon the canny Rachimov called an assembly of the peasants and bade them pass a resolution of praise for his work and of thanks for his "coöperation" in the bandit hunt. This he sent to the authorities. But the truth at last got out, Rachimov was given a sensational trial and eight years in jail, with subsequent loss of citizenship for three years. His behavior, it was stated in court, amounted to counter-revolution in that it seriously threatened the faith between peasants and government.

The most remarkable thing about all this brutality and corruption is not that it exists, but the frankness with which it is continually exposed. None of the damning facts I record are due to my own shrewd research, but to the constant muckraking that goes on in the *Pravda Vostoka.* It "sounds the alarm" constantly over deficiencies in local government. Several highly paid correspondents are kept in the field, traveling into remote districts to report all kinds of scandals and abuses of power. I met one of these reporters, a brilliant writer of feature stories named El Reguistan, in a Bokhara hotel. Comment-

ing on the fact that his room in the hotel had windows looking two ways and an ante-room, I received the answer:

"Oh, yes, my newspaper pays for that. I have many people coming to me with secret information. Sometimes they endanger their lives by coming. I must be able to guard their privacy."

One of El Reguistan's exposés was at that moment appearing in the *Pravda Vostoka*, with enough dynamite in it to shake Bokhara on its foundations. He had unearthed a ring of grafters who had flourished for several years. In 1923 or 1924, when government was still scarcely organized in Old Bokhara after the Revolution, a Jewish family came thither from the Ukraine and secured posts in the financial department. Once the most famous trading town of Central Asia, Old Bokhara is still the only city in all the Soviet Union where private traders may count incomes in tens or even hundreds of thousands. Financial Inspector of Bokhara—what juicier job could any man desire? The family from the Ukraine got not only this post but a score of related ones. They placed their relatives and friends in every strategic spot in the taxing and auditing de-

partments. When honest subordinates complained, their reports were sidetracked by an accomplice in the bureaus to which complaints go, and the complainant himself soon lost his job. Completely controlling the financial organs of Bokhara, the grafting ring next began to remit taxes in a wholesale manner, receiving large bribes in return. All of this was duly set forth with three column headlines by El Reguistan; he was preparing a follow-up in the shape of an attack on the courts.

The case of peasant Bekalef was one of the many exposures made by *Pravda Vostoka.* In a local election of the Peoples Co-Judges (citizens who sit in groups of three with the chief official judge to decide all cases),[1] Bekalef arose in the local assembly of peasants to state that in his opinion "all the candidates are grafters and protectors of landlords, who ought to have no place in a Soviet election." Bekalef was promptly hushed; the election was rushed through. Whereupon Bekalef was accused of slandering the candidates and was tried before a court composed of the slandered co-judges, who condemned him to three months' hard labor on the roads.

[1] See Chapter XII.

How soon, one wonders, will any other peasant care to emulate Bekalef's fight for clean government?

Yet they do emulate it; in even the most distant villages the struggle goes on. Graft and abuse of power are not new in Central Asia; the thing that is new is the hope of young idealists that these things may be overthrown. Letters and complaints pour into all central offices from peasants, from farm hands, even from women, who believe that perhaps something may come of it. Sometimes they risk much to attack entrenched power; sometimes they try to evade risk by anonymity.

Even the radio stations receive such complaints from distant villages. "To some of these far-off places," said the manager of the Tashkent radio station to me, "we are the only place they know about in Tashkent. They have complaints about their officials; perhaps they do not trust even the county officers. They know nobody higher up. So they send to us an appeal for help by radio." He showed me a letter received from a distant village which read as follows:

"Is it permitted under Soviet law for a man to

have two wives? But the president of our village Soviet has recently taken a second young wife and it is said he even gave *Kalym* (purchase money) for her. Please announce this fact over the radio, so that our peasants may be shamed into action. But do not give my name, I fear much his vengeance."

The Tashkent radio station decided to comply with the request. Announcement was made and of course heard in the distant village in its club with a loud speaker. Two weeks later another letter came thanking the radio for its help, and reporting that the villagers, moved by the public scandal of it, had held a special meeting to recall their president.

The path of self-government is thorny, in the West or in the East. But it would be a serious mistake to assume that graft and abuse of power are universal in Central Asia, or are the chief features of the newly created local government. Far more typical, after all, of the new people's rule was the "Gusar Meeting" which I attended in Old Bokhara. There were no Russians present; I sat in a local assembly of Uzbeks in the act of governing. My host, who took me, expressed surprise that I should wish to see

anything so simple. Nothing was easier than to go, he assured me, but I would find only local problems, and nothing that could interest a stranger.

A small stone court, belonging to the neighborhood mosque, and formerly flanked by sleeping-cells of students of the Koran, had been roughly roofed and filled with unpainted wooden benches. In the flickering light of three hanging kerosene lamps gathered the members of some sixty households, all residents of one street and its adjoining alleys. This was the "Gusar" meeting, the "meeting of the street," the primary unit of government in Bokhara. There was no officialdom. A native policeman, who sat in one of the rear benches, was merely one of the residents with no especial duties. More than a hundred adults were present. The women, unveiled, gathered in a shy circle at one side of the hall, with their backs to the men and their shawls drawn slightly over their faces. Thirty or forty children wandered amiably among the benches, and played furtive games of tag in the rear of the hall.

The atmosphere was that of a neighborhood meeting anywhere. The same handful of earnest speakers, advocating measures for the good of the

neighborhood; the same half-attentive crowd, dividing their interest between the orators, the discipline of children, and occasional gossip with neighbors. Not so different in essence from small town folk on all the Main Streets of the world, though the rows of white-turbaned and plush-capped brown faces were met in a remodeled mosque of Old Bokhara, with rough stone floors and arched stone walls.

The Gusar Commission, of three members, took seats on the platform and asked the meeting to choose two temporary additions to their ranks for the evening. The commission is elected every six months and makes regular reports every three months. Its members sit in the city Soviet, the government of Bokhara, representing all the Gusars. Modern law requires that one member at least of the Commission shall be a woman; two had been at different times elected, but were too shy to sit on the platform.

I asked my host, a local resident Uzbek, if there had been any Gusars before the Revolution. There were Gusar officials, he said, but no assemblies. The official was appointed from above to look after the neighborhood, to make lists of births and deaths, and

to report to his superiors all matters occurring in the locality. It was all from above; there were no assemblies called and no questions by the people.

After an informal roll call, a quorum being present, the Gusar Commission announced that four matters were up. First the use of their new "club building." I learned that this crude stone hall in which we were meeting, had been secured by petition from the city government, and roofed and furnished with benches by the funds of the neighborhood. Four of the richer families had given fifty roubles each; others, less; workmen had given labor. It was a cheerless room, cold and without windows, but it was their own. Suggestion had been made that it be used as a school for adults part of each week, for women in the afternoon and men in the evening, so that all might learn to read and write and to understand the essentials of government. No one was opposed to the plan, but a tedious and inefficient discussion about committees to take charge of the work and petitions to be sent to the Board of Education for a teacher ensued. Suggestion that a few evenings be reserved for a drama club met with approval.

The rights of the street-sprinkler was the next on the calendar. The streets of Bokhara are canyons of heavy dust laid by water squirted from goatskin bags by men who have inherited this trade from bygone ages. Picturesque figures, I had seen them often in the narrow, sunny alleys, swinging their water bags as they sprinkled. I learned now that their wages were paid by the local neighborhood which they watered, and that since they are all now organized in a trade-union, they get two weeks' vacation on pay every six months, and have working clothes furnished for both summer and winter. The matter before the Gusar was the granting of winter clothes and fifteen days' vacation to their street-sprinkler, and the question whether a substitute was needed during his absence.

The Government Industrial Loan came next on the program; I learned how thoroughly organized was the campaign which carried the sale of each new loan into the remotest neighborhoods. Here in Old Bokhara each Gusar had subscribed collectively. From two to four hundred roubles was expected; the Gusar which I attended had subscribed two hundred and forty, different members taking different shares

of it according to their means and the persuasion used on them. Two roubles in every five had been given as first payment at the time of subscription; the remaining three roubles were still to be got in installments. The Gusar Commission reported themselves all busy men, with full-time jobs outside the Gusar, and unable to assume the job of collector in addition to other official duties. Would the meeting please elect special collectors? . . . The meeting did. Nobody wanted the job, but somebody took it.

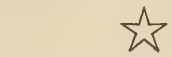
Last of all came the election of Club Manager for the new building with all its hoped for activities. The meeting grew very lively, with much laughter, as each nominee tried to pass the job to some one else. The Club Manager was unpaid, and the task bound to be onerous. Every one refused but a young communist was finally chosen, who consented because two other young communists said earnestly that it was his "party duty" to take leadership when asked, and that all the other available communists had more "social work" than he. Among the Gusar membership not more than half a dozen were communists. Yet these were quite obviously the guiding

element, and the only ones not permitted to refuse unpaid duties. If all the communists were overloaded, an active trade-unionist might be called on, on the plea that "he owed it to the union to take the lead among the masses."

Uninteresting, my host had called the meeting. Everyday problems indeed, but typical. The steady transformation of religious property into neighborhood clubs by local vote and petition; the inclusion of the most primitive form of labor in trade-unions with special privileges; the use of the lower assemblies for carrying out the programs of the central government; last of all, the rise to leadership of the young communists, who were decidedly in the minority but willing to do the work—these are the chief characteristics of political life to-day among the common people of the Soviet Union. I had seen them all in one evening in a single Gusar meeting in Bokhara, in the neighborhood gathering, only half interested in politics, like other little neighborhoods all over the world. To similar meetings, by figures given me in Samarkand, come seventy-three percent of the men and sixteen percent of the women in the Republic of the Uzbeks.

Simple, unspectacular, but such organization is relied on to finish the rule of *mullahs*, the old dominance of fat grafters, the historic brutalities of power in Asia. Is the war unequal? There are more weapons than those of politics.

*Elections and*
*Land Confiscation*



## CHAPTER EIGHT

THE fight for power of the British in India or the former czar in Turkestan, is relatively simple. It demands expenditure for munitions and airplanes, and contrived allegiance from princes and religious leaders either by fear, prospect of benefits or by diplomacy. The aims of such governments are attained if they secure reasonable safety for life and property, control of transport, and the chance for their own nationals to make money. But the fight for power of the Bolsheviks in Central Asia is much more complex. Socialism, even more than democracy, demands the whole-souled coöperation of the masses. Not alone opposition but even indifference is fatal to it. Nothing less than enthusiastic and continued effort on the part of the whole people, organizing coöperatives, state-owned industries, collective farming, can be counted success. Nothing less than a change in the soul of Asia.

During my visit two campaigns were going on which emphasize the impassable gulf between the

social system of the Soviet Union and the rest of the world. These were the elections and the land confiscations. Both of them were marked by an open, aggressive attempt on the part of government to stir up class strife within each village to the end that power might pass to the landless farm laborers and the poorer peasantry. It was intended to drive out of political life and economic dominance the well-to-do farmers, petty landlords and all their associates —they who have always been revered as the big folks of Central Asian villages, obviously favored of Allah who grants them prosperity.

Let it not be assumed that elections in the Soviet Republic are a foregone conclusion. True, there is only one party, and elections are by a show of hands and not by secret ballot. But for all that hot contests occur, by no means always resolved in favor of communists. Or if indeed local communists are elected, let it not be supposed that they are always intelligent followers of Marx. They may be local landlords, or even former bandits, who have skillfully managed to attain party membership by ways not to be too closely scrutinized.

During the pre-election campaigns, the press of

Central Asia gave continuous headlines to district after district, making exposures, urging clean-ups. Appeals to Young Communists, to the Women's Section, to the Society of Plowmen and other local organizations, to "get busy," mingled with frank wails over failures. In such and such a village, the local landlords have secured posts on the election commission, and are keeping the farm laborers from voting. In another district, the *mullahs* have come to such power that they have instituted a "veils for women" campaign, and whereas elsewhere the modernists are unveiling the women, here even the formerly unveiled wives of the nomad Kirghiz are being converted to veiling! So goes the fight, a rampart won here, a trench lost there.

The fight for power in the local governments is waged on at least three fronts. The weapons on the economic front are land confiscation and the building of factories—thus creating a new landed class of former farm laborers in the villages and an industrial proletariat in the towns. The educational front, including all forms of propaganda drives as well as the schools, is the second. On the political front, attempts are made to capture the elections.

For many weeks before the election assemblies are held in the villages, campaigns begin. Meetings of farm laborers and poor peasants are called, to prepare slates of candidates, and organize support for them. An important weapon is the list of "ineligibles," those who by Soviet law are deprived of the vote. Theoretically these are traders, employers of labor and former monarchist officials; but when the local lists are actually completed, strange results are often disclosed. A week or two before the election, a mass meeting of "Reporting" is held at which the past officials are supposed to give an account of themselves before the people; they are subjected to very free heckling. Then comes the actual election meeting, in which after some discussion, a show of hands elects the officials. However frank may be the attempt to control votes by preliminary agitation and by disqualifying electors, any direct pressure on the individual elector at the time of meeting is frowned upon. When discovered, it causes scandal. Theoretically, at the last moment, the peasant is free to express himself. This makes the pre-election clean-ups all the more necessary.

"There is hardly a village Soviet in our entire

region," declares the public prosecutor in a meeting in Tashkent, "where presidents or important members have not been removed since the last elections, on account of criminal acts. In the Angrenski region, a village president was removed because he sold a woman; in the Mid-Chirchikski district, members of the village Soviet have been condemned by the court for participating in the murder of the peasant correspondent (the writer of exposés in the newspapers); in Upper Chirchikski district, the authorities arrested a farm hand for criticizing their government; they are now being investigated and a clean-up will take place." These are a few of the troubles of the communists in fighting for the soul of Central Asia.

There are many more. "In A——, the president of the regional Ispolkom immediately after his election two years ago was given a banquet by the local beys (well-to-do farmers). He struck up an alliance with them, and one of the beys gave him a horse. To-day that 'bey' is president of the Election Commission in the district." So writes a vigilant citizen in a letter to the *Pravda Vostoka.*

In another issue, a three column headline reads: "Let us take, for instance, the Election Commissions

of the Andizhan district." There follows, with cartoons, a summary of undesirable persons who have succeeded in getting posts of control in the coming elections. . . . "They should not be allowed any nearer an election commission than the range of a rifle bullet," cries the writer. He lists them as follows:

> A. Hodjaief, member of the regional election commission. Lives by private trade. Became president of the coöperative and in its name secured several bazaar booths from the City Property Bureau. Collects the profits of these for himself. Committed several other crimes of graft. Member of the Communist Party, but hasn't unveiled his wife. Gets drunk regularly.
>
> Akhmedof, also member of the election commission of Assakinski. Son of a trader; owns two fine houses. Got jobs for former beys with the coöperatives and Cotton Trust. Gets drunk regularly. At the celebrations of the Eleventh Anniversary he got violently drunk with a party of friends and scandalized the peasants.
>
> Busrukbaef, member of Party. Has twenty tanaps of land which he rents to share-croppers. Under his influence the taxes on "beys" were reduced from 1,902 roubles to 300 roubles. Tried to get land returned to a landlord after it had been given to the farm hand working it.
>
> Kamilof, member of election commission and president of Laborers Union. Candidate for

Party, though a son of an *iman* (high clergy) and himself a former *muezzin*. Has 42 *tanaps* of land which he lets out to share-croppers. Stole 200 roubles from the Laborers Union and is up on trial for this.

Supplementing the disclosures made by special investigators for the newspaper, come letters sent by local peasants. These are always featured; it is regarded as a triumph when distant organizations of farm hands summon up courage and confidence to appeal for publicity. The following is a typical complaint signed by a large number of peasants:

"At present preparation for elections go on in our village. Those in charge of the lists try to deprive of voting right the members of collective farms, the members of the Ploughmen's Society, and all the poor peasants. Persons on the election commissions are unfriendly to the Soviet Power. Here are those persons:

"Ismail Said, former bandit, member of the Kindj bandit gang, which, being literate, he served as secretary. Now has become teacher.

"Mussa Karim, son of a high *ishan* and bey. Took part in guerrilla war against the Soviets, in the band of Hodji. Also stole the funds of the Forest Workers Union.

"Bakhribibi, women's representative on the election commission, is daughter-in-law of a *cazi* (religious judge) and rich bey."

When such anti-communist persons are appointed on election commissions, their tactics are simple. They deprive of vote the more energetic leaders of the poor peasants, and try to elect the land-owners and rich beys who have always been "prominent people." They adduce at times amusing reasons. In one district they disqualified a farm laborer from voting on the grounds that he had been a member of the village Soviet during the period of military communism, "and therefore cannot take part under the New Economic Policy, since all the methods have changed."

Against such old officials, the aroused farm laborers employ quite the same tactics, making their own lists of "ineligibles." However they are warmly applauded for these tactics, for the frank policy of the central government is to cast power into their hands. They are only enforcing the law which deprives of vote the employers of labor and the traders. Rather strange to western eyes is the open exultation of the *Pravda Vostoka* at increases in the lists of "ineligibles." A news despatch from Osh, a village of the Pamirs on the borders of China, runs as follows:

"From the Uzgen volost among the Kirghiz comes news that pre-election meetings of poor peasants and especially of those who received land in the recent land confiscation, have already been held in all villages, to inspect the lists of 'ineligibles.' The lists have tripled and quadrupled since last time. In one village where formerly eight persons were deprived of rights, there are now eighty-seven." . . . All of this with triumph! . . . "In another village was exposed a bey, who had registered as a 'working peasant' but who was actually a money-lender and who not long ago beat up a poor peasant for delay in paying a loan. . . . Cases of brutality by a former judge have been revealed. He beat up a poor peasant, injured his head, and destroyed by cattle the cotton fields which the Department of Agriculture had set out as a demonstration field on the poor man's land."

The comparatively peaceful method of manipulating election lists is not the only one employed in the political struggle. Many cases were listed in which the richer elements of the village broke up by force the election meetings from which they had been debarred. "In village A——," runs the ac-

count, "there were lively times. A group of the deprived ones determined to break up the election meeting and charged it on horseback. Under the attack of horsemen the poorer peasants dispersed, but soon reassembled, made lists of their attackers, and declared the intention to prosecute them on criminal charges." . . . Thus life keeps on boiling in the elections.

The attempt to rule a country not by the old easy method of accepting its customs and dealing with its princes, but by the venturesome tactics of invading its farthest villages with organization and propaganda, exalting the low and bringing down the high, cannot be accounted the most peaceful path to power. It disposes once for all of the claim sometimes made that the Bolshevik policy in Asia is the same as that of the czar, a mere extension of Russian imperialism. The Bolsheviks are committed to social revolution; because of it they have forfeited one Asiatic alliance after another; because of it they have chosen the difficult and stormy path of upheaval, even within their own boundaries. But they are experienced in riding storms and in finding

their path to power by analysis of social forces and organization of social classes.

Besides the political weapons they have in their armory a powerful economic weapon—that of land confiscation. This is the application of the basic land laws of the Soviet Union to the rural districts of Turkestan, where the conditions of land ownership make it particularly more difficult. It will come as a surprise to most students of Russian conditions to know that the land revolution which took place in Russia proper nearly twelve years ago, as a part of the Revolution, is only now going on in Turkestan. During my visit, three important new districts were undergoing the "land reform," by which is meant the confiscation of landlord's estates and their distribution to farm laborers.

The Mohammedan clergy and the local landed gentry were far more intimately entrenched in the Central Asian village than the priests and the landlords were in Russia. There was little absentee landlordism, with its middle hierarchy of paid overseers who could be displaced without affecting the social life of the village. Land ownership in Turkes-

tan was similar to that which I found two years ago in the interior of China; it was knit into the very structure of the village. Relatively small landholders, owning irrigated soil from fifty acres up to a few thousand, rented these on shares to tenants, made usurious loans to the poor, gave bribes to the rich, connected themselves in various ways with the clergy, and were the dominating factors in village affairs. When the Bolsheviks took power, they adapted themselves to the new names, became "presidents of village Soviets," "directors of cooperatives," and even "secretaries" of revolutionary societies of landless peasants or of the local communist organization. In practice they naturally nullified or sabotaged enforcement of communist policies whether in land ownership, collective wage agreements or unveiling of women, continuing their habits unchanged as the East has been used to do under many changes of western governors.

The communists not only attack the political power of this group, but their economic dominance in a steadily advancing program covering many years. The difficulties to be faced may be judged from the fact that, twelve years after 1917, the

large district of the Tadjik Republic still has the former feudal conditions of land tenure. Farm hands there are still paid in kind, often without fixed wages; tenants farm on shares, paying half the crop for the use of the soil.

"That region is too near the border of Afghanistan and China," the communists give as the reason they are still unable to enforce Soviet land laws there. "Most of the property consists of flocks and herds. We have already had the lesson of seeing thousands of cattle driven over the border on the mere rumor of approaching nationalization."

The fact that land nationalization may be difficult by no means indicates that it is permanently abandoned. Systematic preparations for it have been going on in Central Asia ever since the Bolsheviks took power. The first step is unionizing of farm hands and tenants. This is followed by propaganda on the land laws of the Soviet Union, which entitle the actual users of land to hold it direct from the government without payment of rent. When local sentiment is believed to be "ripe" and the local farm hands strong and courageous enough, there follows a calculated legal expropriation. It is done

under the name of "land reform" with no apologies to any ancient ideal of private property. I was encouraged, though a foreigner, to go down and see it "as a great historic event, the nationalization of the last privately owned lands in the Soviet Union."

The process of systematic nationalization began in 1925 in Tashkent, Samarkand and Fergana, where the Soviet Government felt its strength greatest. The three districts are close to the railways and the industrial centers; moreover in Fergana more than a third of the rich cotton-growing lands were farmed by tenants, who were paying exorbitant rents and were ready to aid in the confiscation. Some 182,000 hectares of land were taken over, followed a year later by 23,574 more in the Bokhara district. The seized land was divided among landless laborers and tenants, first choosing those who were actually working on the land. Faisuli Hodjaief, chairman of the Council of Peoples Commissars in Uzbekistan, proudly reported to Moscow that rent-rolls of seventeen to twenty million roubles annually had been abolished. Three years later, the Department of Agriculture reported that an increase in productivity had been noted on

confiscated lands, amounting to fourteen millions in the crops raised by the new owners, due to more careful attention to cotton planting. Evidently the decrease in production noted in European Russia after the land division is not to be expected in Central Asia; for its former landlords, unlike some in European Russia, had no modern methods of farming, but merely sublet to tenants who borrowed equipment at ruinous rates of interest. To-day these same tenants, especially if they organize in collectives, have access to government credits at six percent interest, and can obviously do better farming.

Not till 1928-29 did the government feel strong enough to extend the land decree into the remoter districts of the Uzbek Republic. The taking over of land which I observed was in three large but remote districts, and applied to "all estates not worked by the labor of the owner and his family and having 20 hectares or more of irrigated soil, and all estates, whatever their size, belonging to former czar's officials, emir's officials, higher clergy and family of the emir." Agricultural buildings, tools and livestock were included in the confiscation.

This direct attack on all local dignitaries of the old régime, to undermine them by removing their economic base, was a carefully calculated process. First came preliminary agitators, stirring up the landless peasants; resolutions were passed rejoicing that "the lands taken from us by centuries of exploitation are now being returned by our legal government." The landlords, also, got ready for the struggle. They passed no resolutions, but made hasty land sales at low prices to landless ones. Hurried fictitious divorces also took place, splitting large opulent families into several wives and sons, so that the aggregate of property belonging to each might be less.

The following statement was solemnly registered before a notary by a wealthy farmer, disposing of his wives and cattle: "In view of the large size of my family and the unfriendly relations of my wives, and in order to attain peace for my soul, I have made a division of property generally agreed to, including sons, daughters, sheep, horses, and other cattle as follows:

First wife, Kimat-Oi:
3 sons
2 daughters

400 sheep
12 camels
1 horse
1 cow
1 donkey

Second wife, Umid-Oi:
3 sons
2 daughters
400 sheep
13 camels
1 ox
1 donkey

Third wife, Kizliar-Oi:
3 sons
2 daughters
400 sheep
11 camels
1 horse
1 cow
1 donkey

"For myself I retain, with the consent of my family, 200 sheep, three camels, one donkey and one son."

It is hardly to be supposed that Allah had divided sons and daughters among the various wives as justly as the husband did. Obviously, the affidavit was a legal fiction, a way out of the land confiscation. Other methods were also used. Livestock was

hastily concealed or sold ostensibly to some poor peasant who could be trusted to allow the use of it to his "benefactor." Such sales were null and void if discovered, but local authorities, related to the landlords, often kept things dark.

The unionized farm laborers, the organized tenants, the young communists, are supposed to ferret out such sales and concealments and report them to the authorities. A more unpopular duty can hardly be imagined; always the clannish village of the East has held as chiefest of crimes any betrayal of its private affairs to outside governments. But now for the first time, where the propaganda has been effective, a new allegiance claims the young men in the very heart of the village. In the name of a new and alien devotion they will tell how many cows are hid in the hills and how much land has been secretly conveyed to pro forma owners. Who shall judge how much of such devotion is the pure flame of communism, and how much the desire to get even with an over-bearing rival? Allah himself could hardly analyze the motives and the village does not try to. The struggle reduces itself to a naked fight for power. The sudden death of these young in-

formers frequently follows, and after that, perhaps a "cleaning" of the village officialdom by some higher authority.

Last stage in the struggle, the Land Commission appears in the district, armed with a list of landlords and their alleged possessions. Is the list complete? Is it accurate? Certainly not! Never, since history's dawn, has there been a land survey here. Nobody knows how much land exists or who owns it. Day after day the Land Commission sits, often far into the night; the landlords file before it. They deny their holdings; they make statements of their possessions; so much—no more.

The crucial moment comes, the moment which decides how far the new allegiance in the village has supplanted the old. In the bare hall sit all the local peasantry, well-to-do farmers, poor tenants and laborers also. They know the truth of each man's holding. The commissioners sent from above cannot. Will some of those landless ones now arise and say, in the very teeth of the landlord: "You lie; you have so much and so much and so much land; I know, for I have farmed it." Two powerful motives are at war: greed for the land which may now be

theirs without the heavy rents of the past, and fear of a knife in the back some dark night from the dispossessed. These owners are no absentee landlords, like the Russians, who hire armies to protect them; they are village gentry quite able to be their own assassins.

In most cases the farm hands spoke up in meeting. They told intimate scandals of the neighborhood—past floggings for non-payment of debts; they gave away where cows were concealed and lands falsely reported. In many districts the lists of land to be nationalized grew fifty percent through local revelations. The desire for land outweighed the fear of revenge. They hope the government and their local laborers unions will protect them. The government indeed did its part by announcing in the decree that "if the presence of any of the dispossessed landowners in the neighborhood seems to the local authorities likely to be prejudicial to working on the land, they may be exiled from the district." A number have been.

It is appalling to think of the chances for personal revenge offered in such public hearings. The class war cut through families in these revelations. For

instance, Mullah Karimov, owner of a not-so-large plot of ground, was accused of being a former tax-gatherer under the Emir. As such his lands were forfeit. He denied the charge, claiming that he was a poor priest and a teacher. When asked for what services he had received the Emir's gold medal, he replied, "for educational services to the family of a high official." On this his brother-in-law arose in the meeting and said:

"It is not well to lie before the face of the people. The Emir gave you that medal when you gave your own son as a present to his harem. It is not seemly to hide what all here know." What family tragedy lay behind this revelation against Karimov can only be surmised. One guesses at the protests long ago, timid and suppressed, of the mother; at the anger of her brothers, the uncles of the young boy thus presented. Or perhaps it was less laudable family jealousy at the preferment attained by Karimov. Now, a dozen years after, came their chance to retaliate; they brought the family scandal into open court to deprive their brother-in-law of his land.

In a number of localities the local governments were under the landlord's influence and evaded the

decree of confiscation. There followed political "clean-ups." One notes in the reports such comments as these: "In the village of Shirakan it was necessary to expel twenty-six members of the village Soviet from office." And again: "Nineteen presidents of village Soviets were removed in this district." Clear proof that, after much propaganda by government and party agencies, there were still many villages where the *mullahs* and landlords dominated.

Advocates of private property in land were found, disconcertingly enough, even in the Communist University of Tashkent, where the chosen youth of a dozen nationalities study to become party workers and agitators in their home districts. Several students from Kazakstan expressed discontent with the "land reform," saying: "In ten years it will all be the same anyway; those landless ones are shiftless and can do no good with the land." One gave a more fundamental expression of disloyalty: "Our beys are not like the Russian landlords; they really did not oppress the poor so much. . . ." The typical recurrent criticism of socialist policies, which can be duplicated in every land. In Tashkent there was no trifling with these students. One boy was

expelled; the others were given a period of "practical work," in other words, temporary suspension. The limits of free discussion were thus made plain; on matters of land confiscation or any other ultimate principle of socialism, no tolerance was permitted.

Unexpected allies have occasionally come to the aid of the communists. During the height of the land confiscation in Old Bokhara, a session of high Moslem dignitaries resident in that city, issued a proclamation defending the government's action. They quoted liberally from the Koran to prove that when inequalities of wealth arise in a community of "brethren" it is the duty of the rich to divide their lands with the poor. Possibly they hoped to win the favor of the new rulers by this action, but they were disappointed. The atheist communists made use of their proclamation, but in no way relaxed their attacks on religion.

In all the many changes that have taken place through conquest in Central Asia, land ownership has rested very little on legal papers, and very much on the power to take and hold. Yet always there has been some form of recognition of the user's right to the soil, fundamental in all peasant communities.

The new land confiscations, however bitterly they may be fought by those losing lands, are not contested in the name of legal rights, or ideals of private ownership, but as part of a struggle of wits and power. The fight between the village of Jar and the village of Toichi is an entertaining example; it also shows how gradually the villages are becoming convinced that the Soviet power will protect its new land laws.

During the days of the Basmachi—the local bandit war against the Bolsheviks—two *mullahs* died in the village of Toichi, leaving behind them much land. The local bandit chieftain forthwith sent word to the villagers that this land was henceforth his property, since he was the local leader of the Holy War. Whether the village respected this claim because of his title, or merely because of his weapons, they did not dispute it. Later, when bandit leaders began to surrender to the Bolsheviks, this leader also surrendered, becoming a peaceful citizen, but retaining the lands he had seized as a bandit. Since they were too large for him to farm himself, or to hold without attracting attention as a landlord, he divided them among his friends and

retainers, thus maintaining a nucleus of faithful adherents.

A scant two kilometers away from Toichi lay the village of Jar, small and impoverished. They knew of this piece of land which adjoined their own; they cast longing eyes at it. They knew of the Soviet land laws, and that by no law of any kind did the property belong to the retired bandit. For years they held their peace, being Central Asians who know that it is not well to invoke a distant law against a near-by enemy. At last, however, as their need grew greater, they became convinced that the Soviet Government was strong enough to protect them, and was truly on the side of the landless village. They petitioned the Land Commission.

While the Land Commission was considering the facts and keeping them in its files, as Land Commissions do, the inevitable movement of the earth brought the day of spring plowing. All peasants know that by every law of God or man or Bolshevik, the plowing of land gives right to the next harvest. So the former bandit chieftain assembled the village of Toichi, and spoke to them thus: "Let us all go forth and plow the land together, otherwise it will

go to strangers." And the village of Toichi went to the land, one hundred strong with many horses.

The men of Jar had also come to the land with the same intention. Their plows were already in the soil when the Toichians arrived. They desired, it seems, to establish title without waiting for dilatory Land Commissions. So the former bandit cried to his Toichians: "At them!" Being more numerous and on horseback, the men of Toichi crushed to earth the men of Jar, dispersed their oxen, broke their plows and wounded nine of their fellows. To the Courts! The district court gave five years in jail to the former bandit and three to his chief assistants. By the time he gets out, no doubt Toichi and Jar will be jointly sowing and reaping the disputed acres.

*Making Bolsheviks of Central Asians*

## CHAPTER NINE

IN other Asiatic lands—Turkey, China—Bolshevism has been for a time a distant lure or a threat against oppressors, but has been soon cast aside for the solid benefits of foreign investment. Ancient Turkestan, however, belongs to the Bolsheviks; it is the outpost of their strength in Asia. Well aware of its importance by a series of political, economic and educational moves, they are attempting to create here the social changes necessary to communism. They have thrown down the challenge to those economists who say that the soul of Asia is immune to the Marxist dogmas.

To induce Uzbeks, Kirghiz or Turcomans to join the Communist Party is a very easy matter. Too easy! As the chief problem of the Nationalist armies in China was the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who made haste to join the victors, corrupting their ranks with an alien feudal element, so the chief problem of the Communist Party in Central Asia is the enthusiastic entrance of natives, who

wish to belong to the organization of the rulers. In spite of probation periods and occasional clean-ups, former *mullahs*, landlords, and traders still manage to slip through the bars in the rural districts and sometimes even in the cities. The press occasionally carries the news that some local secretary of the party has been removed from office, "because he admitted too many members"—surely a most amazing reason for discipline! The members he admitted were anxious to be communists, only because the Communist Party was the keeper of power.

How skin-deep the veneer of communism may be in some cases is shown in the following letter, written by a candidate to the Party, assistant prosecutor in a district court. He is addressing one of his superior officers, and mingles his communist phrases with old-time flattery. Any one acquainted with the severe, even rude, type of correspondence exchanged between Russian communists, their abhorrence of sentiment and their detestation of religion, will smile at Alla Shukurov's effort to be one of them.

"MOST PRECIOUS COMRADE:

"Together with all your low subjects I beg of you in a speedy answer to assure me of your precious health and of the success of your honorable affairs.

"I, your obedient servant, every night raise my prayers to the Almighty Lord God, and with ceaseless petitions ask from the Highest health upon you and your family. May he give you many children so that under the ever continued rule of yourself and our dear Communist Party we may await years of old age in the successful building of socialism.

"All is of God. May he preserve your days to the delight of your children. Amen! With sincere red-candidate greetings,

"ALLA SHUKUROV."

Even more entertaining was an episode in a village high in the Pamirs. Complaints were sent from the local peasants to the higher authorities against the president of their village Soviet, a party member, to the effect that he had sold his five year old daughter in marriage for the enormous sum of five thousand roubles. The complaint was not because he had broken the law by selling the girl, nor yet because he had also broken the law against child marriage, but simply that he had charged too much. He had capitalized the scarcity of women and his own important position as leading communist to charge an exorbitant price for the privilege of being his son-in-law!

An investigator sent to the district discovered

even worse abuses of power. Drawing the communist maximum wage, and living cheaply as a native Tadjik may, the village president spent his savings to become the chief capitalist of the district. He acquired flocks and herds in quantities and was pasturing them on the village lands. He even tampered with the land laws to obtain control of the soil. When this was reported in my presence to the secretary of the Party for the Tadjik Republic, he cried: "But you haven't left that man in the Party, have you?"

"Don't be in a hurry," replied his informant. "We'll get rid of him as soon as we can, but it won't do to disturb the district. He's also the local sorcerer!"

Frequently cases come to court which show how carelessly or ignorantly power is abused by so-called communists in rural districts. A poor peasant Abdullah in the village Yai-Khiavan borrowed money from the Coöperative Association. When the time came he could not repay. The secretary visited him, pleaded and threatened. The poor man wept and showed his empty hands. The secretary appealed to the president of the village Soviet.

Yusef, the village president (not to be confused with Mullah Yusef of a former tale), had at his disposal more oaths than a simple secretary. He called Abdullah the son of various undesirable creatures and added other insults at which Abdullah begged for mercy. But all these words had no more effect than the simpler ones of the secretary. The money wasn't there.

Whereupon Yusef thought of a good scheme for repaying the loan. Let the poor man sell his land. With two companions over the wine-cups he planned it out. They drank long and sang loudly and invited in a bey, who had some money and desired more land. The sale of land as private property was clearly against the law and Yusef was not only a village president but a "communist" as well. However, he was a Central Asian Communist of not very long standing, and a little matter like the land law seemed to him less important than the debt to the local coöperative. Besides, there are ways of fixing these matters. There would be no legal transfer on any books. Abdullah still works the land, but works it for the bey.

The debt was paid; the village coöperative bal-

anced its books in peace. But Abdullah got poorer and poorer. Other peasants knew of his plight and their whispers reached beyond the village. The regional committee of the Party sent an investigating commission. Yusef and his two friends were "cleaned out" of the Party; the land was ordered returned to Abdullah as illegally sold; the Coöperative was ordered to give him help again. But will Abdullah be any better able to repay this new loan when it comes due? On this point, prophecy is silent.

The rise and fall of Sha Muratov, farm laborer and president of the village of Jagfar, is a most amazing illustration of the odd results of alien theories grafted on ignorant Asiatic trees. It is worthy of inclusion in a modern Arabian Nights. As an energetic farm hand, landless but desirous of acres, Sha Muratov was most hopeful material for Bolshevism. Under the new régime he became first president of his village Soviet, then delegate to the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan, and finally an alternate delegate to the Tzik, the mighty Central Executive Committee of the whole Soviet Union. All of these hasty honors went to his head,

and Sha Muratov conceived a unique idea of "class vengeance" on the beys.

Like all the other landless laborers of Central Asia, Sha Muratov had many personal scores to settle with these well-to-do farmers. Memories of months of sweltering labor requited with a quarter the promised pay; memories of insults and rough handling. The year before he became village president, he had been attacked by an armed band of "beys" who were venting their hate of Bolsheviks on the local laborers. These beys, after assaulting the life and property of many humble citizens, had ended their careers with sentences of death commuted to ten years' imprisonment. But the career of Sha Muratov was just beginning.

Together with five other landless ones who met in his house, Sha Muratov formed a secret Band of Avengers. The class war of the modern communist is not altogether alien psychologically to the old clan vengeance of Asia. But Sha Muratov knew enough of law to realize that even in these days when landless ones are exalted and beys abased, he must have some excuse for violence. It was decided to cut with a razor the arms, legs and back of Batirof,

one of the "Avengers," and lay the blame on certain farmers. After this, vengeance should be easy for a village president who was also a member of Tzik!

On a dark night in January, the Band of Avengers produced the razor, but were met by objections from Batirof. Deep cuts hurt too much, he averred, whereas light cuts were hardly impressive as evidence. By the slaughter of four pigeons and the mixture of their blood with smaller quantities of Batirof's, the stage was set. Half an hour later, Batirof's yells aroused the village, and the names of four farmers were given as his assailants. The four were arrested, sat in jail for a month, and would have sat longer had not one of Sha Muratov's band bragged. When all this reached the ears of higher authorities, the farmers were set free. Nothing, however, was done to Sha Muratov.

"He's a big man! Member of Tzik!" This fact overwhelmed the village of Jagfar which had never, in all its thousand years, been blessed with a resident member of high government.

Sha Muratov now planned more serious action. The former assistant, Batirof, was in jail for simulating an assault, and could no longer be counted

even a friend, so base is ingratitude. His son Noureddin seemed a promising victim for the next attack, which should be no mere simulation. If the higher courts demanded a real attack, they should have it. Noureddin was invited to an evening party, which became an all night celebration with plenty to drink. Towards morning the group decided to go forthwith to the fields to plow. Outside the village, observed by none save the band of avengers, Sha Muratov shot Noureddin. Then all left swiftly for the village before daybreak. What tale more likely than that the four farmers had avenged their imprisonment on Batirof's son?

All that interfered with the plausibility of the tale was the temporary recovery of Noureddin. Sha Muratov, it seems, as a landless farm hand of Central Asia, was not a dead shot. During a month in hospital before he died, Noureddin accused and cursed Sha Muratov. Sha Muratov in turn accused Noureddin and two of his relatives of beginning the assault. Again two innocent men sat in jail, by order of Sha Muratov.

The death of Noureddin brought affairs to a head. From somewhere high up appeared a prosecutor who

had views of his own about "class vengeance." He investigated. He found it common knowledge among the peasants that Sha Muratov had bragged that "as a member of Tzik I have the right to kill ten men at my choice. Ten men—no more!" One had been killed, true; there were still nine left.

Confronted, Sha Muratov carried himself as a great man should. No one had the right to try him, he declared with dignity; nor even to question him. No one but Kalenin himself, the president of the Tzik of all Russia. The prosecutor held otherwise. And Sha Muratov, adventurous farm laborer and landless one, who shed for a brief time on the village of Jagfar the glory of having in its midst a member of Tzik, sits now in jail, sentenced to eight years' solitary confinement. Is it too light for a murderer? Or is it too harsh for a valiant class avenger? Or is it just enough for the purpose of the court—to teach the village of Jagfar something or other?

Can the village of Jagfar ever learn communism? The Communist Party by no means gives up the struggle. Against seemingly impossible handicaps, they expect to create a new Central Asia and new

human beings to live in it. Tens of millions spent to establish factories should produce an urban proletariat, thinking in terms of production and trade-unions. The distribution of land to landless farm hands, and their organization into collectives and coöperatives, are expected to transform the rural districts. And since all of these activities are certain to be corrupted by an older generation, a new generation is to be educated which will know how to build socialism even in the heart of Asia.

Thirteen million dollars is being spent this year in the Republic of the Uzbeks for the new network of primary, professional and higher schools which has sprung up in the last few years. Thirteen million is not very much, barely three dollars a head for the population; but it is four times the sum that was spent three years ago. Five million of it is a free gift from Moscow, part of the twenty million dollar deficit in the budget of Uzbekistan. The rest is raised by the localities. As the land revives from the ruins of civil war, the sums for education will increase in proportion. All of the institutions supported by the Department of Education, from the

primary schools to the motion pictures and the radio, which are also under its control, are intended to rear young communists.

Fifty years of czarist control in Central Asia left the population 97 percent illiterate. There were two kinds of schools, neither of which gave knowledge to workers and peasants. A small number maintained by the Russian rulers in their own language were designed to train government employees and clerks, go-betweens for the conquerors. Since comparatively few such persons were needed, there were in 1912 only 6,204 pupils. Besides there were the schools of the *mullahs*, far more numerous, which trained religious leaders.

A former pupil of one of the *mullahs*' schools described them to me. Picture, he said, some thirty boys squatting in front of a teacher, and all shouting aloud different parts of the Koran. Since the pupils are of varying attainments, they are shouting different chapters. The noise is deafening. Except for the word "Allah," they do not understand a syllable; they learn by rote in Arabic, an alien tongue. If their attention falters, the master takes a long pole which is always beside him, and strikes the

offending youngster. In the old days they used to make cuts in the feet and rub in salt as a punishment for disobedience; but in modern times discipline was laxer. All this schooling was useful only to those who wished to become *mullahs;* to the peasant's and worker's child it was expensively useless. Peasants' and workers' sons learned their jobs from their parents or their bosses. They never learned to read.

To-day, nearly one hundred thousand boys and girls of the Uzbek Republic are in modern primary schools. The number is not large in a population of five million, but it is eighteen times as many as before the Revolution. It is a remarkable achievement in a land so ruined by war and so lacking in teachers or school buildings. Teachers are being rapidly trained; in fact, the most noticeable new structures in Samarkand and Tashkent are the Normal Schools for Uzbeks, Tadjiks, Kirghiz, producing teachers who will go back into the village schools. . . . The new teaching force lacks experience, but it lacks also the constraint of old custom. The schools which I visited, choosing them by chance as I passed them, seemed to me remarkably progressive.

One evening in the Old Town of Tashkent, when I was stumbling with an Uzbek interpreter through the unlighted mud which filled the narrow streets, we saw a light in an ancient stone building. My Uzbek guide told me that this was a mosque, of which certain rooms were used as a public school. We entered, and found thirty boys sitting at old-fashioned double desks. At the blackboard a youth of fifteen was demonstrating a problem in decimals; another boy sat at the teacher's desk. But where was the teacher? There was no adult in the room.

To my question the boys answered: "The teacher comes in the daytime for instruction. To-night is not instruction but collective study." Four evenings a week the boys came to this building, secured the key from the janitor, studied together for three hours under their elected chairman, returned the key and went home. In almost any land, what a chance it would have been for a rough-house! Where would boys of fifteen be expected to keep order and do serious work, by themselves, evening after evening?

I asked if they had no room at home to study, on account of the crowded housing conditions of Tashkent. They answered that younger children studied

at home, but that they were supposed to be old enough to study collectively, each boy helping the other. Their lessons were harder; some boys might not be able to understand them alone; but by meeting together, it was possible for the brighter boys to explain to the stupider. As the lessons went on, the boy at the blackboard finished adding 4.5 to 3, securing 7.5 as a result. Another boy waved his hand and said he didn't understand why, in adding these figures, you put the 3 under the 4 and not under the 5. Several others at once waved hands to signify their desire to answer. Two of them explained patiently, one coming over to the desk of the boy who was puzzled, the better to show him.

"What do you expect to be when you grow up?" They made various answers; most had not decided. Several intended to be engineers; two or three wanted to be doctors.

Were there no girls in their school? Then why were none of them present in the collective study group? Certainly, they informed me, there were girls in school nowadays, but only during the last three years. No girls had yet reached the fifth grade, and the lower grades had no evening study.

They asked me questions about America. As soon as I had answered, and even before I left the room, they had turned back to their work.

Here, in its simplest beginnings, is the process of making Bolsheviks. Boys of this age know nothing of Marx, except that he was a great man who lived in a far land and who now has streets named after him. The dogmas of Marx are reserved for later years. But from the very beginning, children are taught to act collectively, to study collectively, to carry on school government collectively as a preparation for later civilian life. This school had also a summer home with gardens, where the boys went for several weeks to till the soil and indulge in open air sports. In their vacations they were thus taken out of the old-fashioned Uzbek home into the collective life of the State. They were indoctrinated with the idea that some form of state service was life's most desirable career. In most lands, the chances of high pay would be given as a reason for the choice of a profession. Some Uzbek boys hope also to make money; but if so, they never mention the fact as an ideal.

How much theoretical communism is taught to

children of the grammar grades? A surprising amount, though it is conveyed in simple form. They are taught that the workers and peasants are the basis of society, and that everywhere else in the world they are oppressed by capitalism; that only in the Soviet Union are they truly free, and that this freedom was attained by a bloody revolution. They are taught that other lands will some day have revolution also, and that it may be their duty to help those others attain to their own favored status. The latent altruism of youth is thus appealed to. Meantime, since other lands are far away, shrewd pedagogy requires that not overmuch stress be laid on them. Attention is given to local problems. They are taught that they are to help build "socialism," and this is in their minds an uncontested ideal, just as "democracy" is to the school boy of America. Freedom for women, the rights of the farm hand to schooling, the equality of all races, and every variety of public improvement, actual or hoped for, from radio and motion pictures to health regulations and the decrease of the death rate—every ideal and every material advancement—are all lumped together under the name of socialism.

Science and the factory in the cities; the tractor and the coöperatives in the village—these are the tools expected to bring about the new social order. The picture presented for their striving is of a community where state-owned factories exchange goods through coöperatives with peasants organized in collective farms. . . . The glamor which surrounds the factory is described elsewhere. It is conceived as the means of progress towards a bigger, better Central Asia which the young men may share in building. The enticements of large scale material creation and the devotion of social service, those twin and often conflicting aspirations of adolescence, are thus combined to stir the youth of Central Asia. So much, even of theoretical communism, is given to boys and girls in the grammar grades.

The radio and the motion pictures are tools of the Department of Education for the creation of communists, though they give most of their attention to entertainment. But the underlying assumptions are always those of a socialist theory. Just as in the magazine fiction or the vaudeville jokes of America there lurks always the assumption that blessed is the clever salesman or the successful real

estate operator, so the heroes of Soviet movies are workers who invent means to increase production or women who die for women's freedom, or demobilized Red soldiers who clean out the grafters in their village.

Even the old *Chai-Khannas* where the males of Asia quaff their tea, find well-financed competitors in the Red *Chai-Khannas*, usually run by some trade union or social organization, where between sips of the beverage hitherto consecrated to leisure, one must stare at statues of Lenin and propaganda placards. By retiring to a corner, one may spend the day with improving literature—all devoted to communism; or may join a class in the Latinization of the alphabet, and so learn the modern script now accepted for the Uzbek language. Sometimes these Red *Chai-Khannas* are an annex to Workers Clubs, with many class rooms where the ambitious Uzbek can study anything from native music to silk culture. But if he studies silk culture, you may be sure that he learns also the benefits of coöperatives; and if he prefers ancient music, he will find his classmates composing new topical songs to the old tunes. Every kind of advanced education, every opportunity for recrea-

tion, from the drama club to the new lake for water sports above Tashkent, is pressed into the advocacy or explanation of communism. Not always directly, any more than every class in a modern Y.M.C.A. teaches the Christian religion directly. But the final aim in both cases is to strengthen a particular organization and conception of the universe, and to fit the youth of the nation into it.

The Communist University of Central Asia, located in Tashkent, is the highest training school for the creation of Bolsheviks. Though barely five years old, it has six hundred students of no less than seventeen different nationalities, including little known folk like the Belugi, the Arsarintsi, the Khazarintsi. Teaching is carried on in seven languages. The purpose of the school is to prepare party organizers who will work among their own people. The budget of the school comes from Moscow, and not from the Department of Education of Uzbekistan. The ultimate control of propaganda is thus centralized.

The students who come to this school are young men already with practical experience as workers or peasants in the political struggles of the past few

years. They must be able to read and write in their own language and read books in Russian. In general courses their work is similar to a secondary school; in economics it is equivalent to college work. They are supported entirely by the government during their period of study; their room, food, clothing, books and tuition are furnished.

The rector of the school with whom I spent an afternoon is a keen administrator, who seems hardly past his early thirties. He described to me the method of instruction used; it is very modern and lays great emphasis on self-activity. The teacher introduces a subject, explains the different views regarding it and the sources of information, giving a list of two hundred and fifty pages of reading in Russian. Thereafter, for ten days, the students devote themselves to reading, while the professor sits in the class room with them and answers any questions they come to ask. He next gives them a "consultation," in groups of five at a time; for an hour they discuss the subject, and appoint a representative from their group to prepare a digest of it. Then the entire class assembles in a "conference," during which the delegate from each group of five presents

the conclusions of that group in a twenty minute paper, followed by discussion.

"The aim of the professor," said the rector, "is to lecture very little, but to be at the student's disposal for questions. Only in some of the minor nationalities, where the students cannot read Russian fluently, is the teacher forced to lecture for several sessions in order to give a digest of the books. After that the same procedure of consultation and conference is followed."

There are no examinations in the western sense. Decision regarding the retention of a student in the school depends on several factors: First, the student makes his own report on the number of hours of reading he has done; this is roughly checked by the librarian. The teacher estimates his work; so also does the conference of the pupils. Twice each year the combined judgment of his various teachers, the head of his department, and the group of pupils with which he works is put in the form of a report which is submitted to the approval of his group of twenty-five students. They decide whether he is learning enough to justify the continued expense of his training.

"Many factors are taken into account," said the rector. "Not merely how much he knows, but 'Is he learning? Can he plan his work? Can he think? Has he logic and judgment? Can he express his ideas?' The ultimate question is of course whether he is improving his abilities by staying in the school."

Difficult are the problems faced by the Communist University in its effort to make Bolsheviks of Central Asians. "Our club work is very poor," said the rector. "This is largely due to the low cultural background of the students. Thirty to forty percent of them cannot understand European music; it hurts them to listen to it. We break our heads over the problem of teaching them to witness a European drama. They can learn theories by rote, as once they learned the Koran, but how can they apply them to life when they have no previous knowledge?

"They learn, for instance, the law of gas expansion in physics. What can this mean to them, when they have no idea what a gas is? How can you make an educated communist of a boy who never heard of the theory of Darwin, or any one of the laws of natural science, who in fact never knew any

science, or what the scientific point of view implies? Our chief worry is the dogmatism of our students, the repeating of theories without knowing what they mean. They have fought in the class struggle, but they have never analyzed their actions."

Difficult as it may be to make intelligent Marxians of Central Asians, the practical allegiance of tens of thousands of peasants and workers and farm hands, Uzbeks, Turcomans, Kirghiz, has been heroically simple. They fought in the Red Army; side by side with Russian workers and peasants, they overthrew the Whites and cleaned out the bandits. They risked their lives for a cause which must have had for them some great and shining meaning, whether they understood its theories or not. And still to-day, in the remote hill districts, young men and young women are dying to create what they call communism, which means to them, among other things, woman's freedom, the right of the farm hand to organize, the freeing of village life from the old priestly control.

High in the Pamirs are two ancient forts, separated from each other by four days' horseback journey. From one to the other runs a mountain river,

whirling, full of waterfalls, rapids, white foam over rocks. In the days of the Basmach rebellion, led by the local Whites against Bolsheviks, a group of Red soldiers were marooned in the upper fort, not knowing whether their allies were living or dead. Almost at the end of their supplies, the commander called to him a native Tadjik, skilled in swimming, and gave him an oilskin packet.

"In this packet are our lives," he said. "Don't give it to Nicholas. Don't give it to the Basmachi. Give only to a Red commander. To the commander in the fort below if he is still living; otherwise to any Red commander."

The Tadjik bound together two inflated goat skins, on which he was used to crossing mountain rivers, and launched himself into the boiling current. Twelve hours later he appeared at the fort which was four days' horseback journey below. Bruised and wounded from the rocks, unable to speak a word of Russian except *Krasny Kommandir* (Red Commander), he pushed his way into the fort where he was almost bayoneted by a suspicious soldier for refusing to give up his packet. He repeated *Krasny Kommandir* till he reached the com-

mander, a gaunt, barefoot man, sleeping with his force on filthy straw heaps, preparing already a mine to blow up his fort in despair rather than surrender to torture. New hope was aroused by the message brought by the Tadjik. With united plan, the two forts cleared out their enemies.

Only four years later did this tale leak out by chance when the Tadjik was fired from a job by an officious Russian clerk on a charge of sabotage. He protested his loyalty; he sought the "Red commander" to vouch for him, that he might get his job again. He got, in addition, when the tale was known, the order of the Red Banner. . . . "Why wasn't it given to him sooner?" I asked when I heard the tale. . . . "Because no one in the mountains thought his deed unusual," was the answer. These were the same high Pamirs that sheltered the exploiting sorcerer turned communist—the Asian mountains where clever trickery and stupendous heroism are equally taken for granted.

The same *Pravda Vostoka* that prints exposures of corrupt communists in Bokhara, and the brutality of self-important officials among the peasants, publishes also the deaths of women fighting for free-

dom, and of farm hand correspondents agitating against grafters. Nor does the supply of martyrs fail; at each funeral scores volunteer to carry on the dangerous service. Less spectacularly, but none the less heroically, hundreds of obscure Uzbek health workers and farm experts, rapidly and not very thoroughly trained, labor in backward villages, and mark progress by the forming of a new coöperative or the passing of a village health ordinance.

The workers and the peasants and the women, the martyrs and the officials alike, call it communism they fight for. Economists in university chairs may dispute their right to the term, questioning whether communism can be applied to their conditions at all. But even Russian communism has become in practice something different from theories. It encourages coöperatives instead of suppressing them; it strengthens trade unions to struggle against over-weening state trusts. It adapts itself to daily life, striving to make that life constantly more collective in form and spirit, while still preserving the name which meant originally a far more definite dogma. The Uzbek and Tadjik and Kirghiz, fighting for a new organization of society, call their far-off aims com-

munism. Since they die for the name, they have perhaps a right to it.

Under whatever name, a struggle between two worlds goes on to-day in Soviet Central Asia, the same struggle which rages across all the continent, under varying organizational forms. It is perhaps clearer here and more ruthlessly determined. It is war between the old village gentry and their allies the *mullahs* on the one side, and the landless ones, the modernists, the unveilers of women, on the other.

*The Homes of*
*the Uzbeks*

## CHAPTER TEN

BEHIND high walls of sun dried bricks through which no windows ever face the narrow streets, lie the homes of the Uzbeks. All their life turns inward. In wealthy families the yellow-gray walls often enclose spacious gardens, stone-flagged paths leading to some secluded pool, trees under whose shade the women sit through the heat of summer, always awaiting their lord. Even in poorer homes, which can afford but two rooms, respectable families maintain one room as the "women's half," set apart from the other across a little court beyond which no male visitor may venture.

Here in seclusion, with only such sun and air as may creep into court yards, the women of the Uzbeks wait from day to day their destiny. They wait leisurely, unmoving. It is not respectable for an Uzbek woman to be active. Girls who go to the new girl's school in Samarkand, find the gymnastic lessons at first highly objectionable and exhausting. I have seen them try to run, and they could hardly

coördinate the unaccustomed movements. All their lives they had been trained to move slowly, languorously; even in the dance, when their bodies and arms sway seductively, they hardly move from their station. The higher their social position, the less they move. Women of the lower classes have to walk to market; women of richer homes send servants.

Those women forced to invade the public streets cover themselves with heavy draperies from head to foot, closing their faces with the hideous black *paranja*. This is no light scarf, such as the women of Turkey wore as a veil, drawn archly under dark eyes in the bazaar. It is a heavy plaque of closely woven horse-hair, veiling the woman from the top of her head to her waist. Meeting at the side the long white robes which swirl to the ground about her, they make of her an ugly walking pillar, hardly human in aspect. The religion of the country, an intensely fanatic Mohammedanism, has demanded that women shall be so covered.

Only in very recent years, since 1926 and 1927, have foreigners been able to enter the homes of Uzbeks, or meet their women. But now, in many casual ways one may encounter them, at the new day nurseries, the women's clubs, the women's collective

*The Hideous* Paranja *Worn by Veiled Women*

*The Modern Unveiled Women*

workshops, and be as casually introduced by them into their home life, which is rapidly changing, but still bears many traces of the old customs.

I visited my first Uzbek household by accident. The fast train from Samarkand lands passengers for Bokhara, with the usual Russian disregard for personal comfort, at two o'clock in the morning at Kagan station, eight miles from the city. The expected autobus failed to make an appearance, while the unhospitable station, having done its duty by receiving me, promptly closed its doors and turned me out into the night. With a Russian woman with whom our mutual inconvenience had acquainted me, and who proved to be an organizer of "collective farms" under the Department of Agriculture, I went to a near-by *Chai-Khanna*. Its large, stifling room was filled from wall to wall with carpet-covered platforms on which turbaned men were sleeping. Across a dusty court a private room awaited us, tiny and bare with a private wooden platform on which we passed the night. Next morning my new-found friend introduced me to an Uzbek household, where we washed and sat on rugs while we warmed our feet in the family oven.

The thorough heating of rooms that we know in

the West, is not indulged in by Central Asia. Warmth is concentrated in one central spot. Around it the family gather. Under the floor, and fed from outside to avoid dust, is an earthen oven, whose heat rises gently through a square hole. Over this is set a low table covered by a heavy quilt which drops to the floor on all sides and confines the warmth beneath. Sitting on rugs or folded quilts around this table, the guests and family stick their slippered or stockinged feet into the grateful comfort of the oven. Steaming tea is offered and fruits are dispensed from a great brass tray laid on the table. Russian doctors claim that the Uzbek oven is a frequent cause of rheumatism and chilblains; but Uzbek families who have tried the modern Russian stoves for a winter, usually give them up because they consume so much fuel. For a people of little wealth, living in a warm and almost treeless land, the Uzbek oven seems very well designed to get the utmost benefit from very little.

The household wealth of the Uzbek family is in rugs and quilts and china. I saw no chairs at all in the first home I visited. But in the little stone corridor outside the room, where every one paused to

remove the shoes which carried the dust of the street, was a pile of silk padded quilts which reached the ceiling. Bright with vivid colors, soft and shining, they offered endless hospitality to a variable number of guests. By day they softened the floor-rugs, and were used as pillows and cushions; by night each guest made his bed on the floor with as many quilts as he desired for softness. Besides these, and the warmly colored rugs of the East which completely hid the floors, the chief furnishings were the family's possessions in china, placed in cunningly carved niches in the walls. A plant or two at the windows, and a few handsome chests of family possessions were enough for a life which was lived on the floor, kneeling or sitting. The walls of the room and the ceiling beams and the niches for china were richly painted, terra cotta and gold and blue and green.

Might I perhaps take a photograph of the family around its oven, I asked, hesitating a little, for to all conservative Mussulmans, the pictured human form is forbidden and evil. They smiled cheerfully and arranged themselves. The ban on photographs has been one of the first to go. So thoroughly have Uzbeks been converted to the camera that on more

than one occasion when I was taking pictures in Bokhara, old women begged to be photographed, "and give me a copy, please, so that when I am dead, my children may see and remember."

After they had shown the two rooms of the home, my Uzbek hosts led me into the court, which forms in the long sunny summers, the real center of Uzbek family life. Into it the doors and windows open from surrounding rooms. The court may be small or large, according to the wealth of the family, but the smallest court will almost always be shaded by one tree, and a few plants. And even the small courts have terraced levels; the low square perforated stone through which runs the water after the family washing, the ground level above this, and then higher levels of stone verandas or earthen roofs. Under one of these verandas I saw through open windows a half basement, where the grapes of the family courtyard, each bunch carefully treasured, were drying in the warm shade into raisins. From a higher level opened the kitchen, a dark room with earthen bread-oven in one corner, flanked by open grills on which were cooked the soups and meats.

On a tiny ledge in the court the baby daughter

danced in the sunlight, while her mother and grandmother shook tambourines in monotonous thrumming, and the father gazed in placid content at his assembled family. The child's feet tapped the stones, without leaving their place; there was no room for her to move in any direction. Nor was such movement required for the dance, which consisted in the slow swaying of the body and movements of the arms. Mingled with the awkward grace of a child of six was already a naïve feminine seductiveness; the baby seemed pleasantly and self-consciously aware that her motions were charming us. One saw how girls only a few years older might arouse the passions of the hot over-sexed males of Central Asia. In four or five years more, at the age of ten or eleven, this child would be of marriageable age according to the old customs of the Uzbeks.

The women of this particular household were, however, "open women," unveiled and modern. The year before, unveiling had come to Bokhara's women in a great mass frenzy. This baby girl might expect to remain a maid till the ripe age of sixteen; for such is the Soviet law regarding marriage. Yet

when a male guest was heard at the outer doorway of the tiny two roomed home, these modern, free women hastened across the courtyard to hide in the "women's half." The joint freedom of a household in which man and wife entertain guests together, is quite an unknown thing. These newly unveiled women had grown used to seeing men in the streets, but not to meeting them indoors. Slowly the new freedoms enter, a step at a time, into the ancient strongholds.

Once the girls were sold in marriage at an early age to the man who could afford to pay for them. When they entered their new home ruled by their husband's mother, they might speak, neither to her nor to their husband, except to answer questions. They might not argue; it was their part to bow the head, to whisper: "I obey." Only after many years, with the bearing of sons, could the young wife reach the dignity of conversation with her elders.

Because of child marriage, and veiling of women, and lack of air and exercise; because of early childbirth without medical attention, and the rearing of children by those who were children themselves, babies and mothers used to die fast in Old Bokhara.

Throughout Uzbekistan there are more men than women, due to the hard and unhealthy conditions of the women's lives. Times are changing in Old Bokhara. Nearly three thousand visits a month are made to the Mothers and Babies Consultation, where two Russian women doctors with a staff of nurses, give advice and care to babies.

Some twenty mothers were in the waiting room on the day of my visit. Little charms against disease were tied to the babies' caps or necks; blue beads against the cough, and amber against malaria, and red beads against fever, and white beads to summon good health. A young nurse gave health talks to the mothers while they waited, but she had not yet convinced them that these charms were useless. Why not try everything, was their catholic resolve.

The doctor, as I entered the inner room, was lifting a baby's sleeves. "You see," she said to the startled mother, "how long they are and how they cramp the baby's arms. Baby should move freely in order to grow strong." Her eyes asked a brief question, then she lifted her scissors, and with two short snaps, the sleeves lost ten inches of their length. The mother gasped, then smiled and nodded.

"Don't they ever protest when you do things like that?" I asked the doctor. "They seem very obedient."

"They are trained to obedience," she answered grimly. "But why should they protest? That woman has buried ten babies. This last one comes to our consultation—and lives! Do you think she minds a pair of cut sleeves when her baby is living?" . . . Possibly the scissors seem to her a new magic, replacing the blue and amber beads.

A Russian woman next, with a request for an abortion. She is armed with many papers: a medical statement which shows the second month of pregnancy, a statement from her husband giving his endorsement. She is twenty-three years old, and has two children, one still nursing. The doctor looks up past records. "I remember her second baby," she says. "Born in very poor condition. The request is granted." The woman will get her operation without pay at a government hospital.

"Very few Uzbeks ask for such operations," says the doctor. "Their problem is the opposite—to get enough living babies." A woman of forty-one years came into the room; she had buried eleven babies.

She came at the age of forty to the Consultation for pre-natal care; she has a healthy baby now, after so many failures. Next came a woman with healthy twins—the successors to ten dead children. A Persian girl followed, eighteen; she has had three children by her forty year old husband; all are dead. Now she has a flourishing child using the artificial food of the station; she herself can give no nourishment.

They come one after another. A new one now who has not before been here. "Is this your first baby?" . . . "What, the first?" "No, the tenth," comes the answer. "How many dead?" says the doctor. "All but one." . . .

"Here is an unusually lucky woman," remarks the physician. "Twenty-two years old, with her second baby, and both alive. Usual in other lands, but a remarkable exception here." She places the infant on the table. The little hands and feet are painted a vivid red. "He doesn't sleep; that's to make him sleep," says the mother. . . . The doctor tells her firmly that red paint has nothing to do with sleeping.

In a corner on exhibition, the doctor shows me the baby-bed of the Uzbeks. Even quite modern

mothers, who have discarded charms and long sleeves and who follow the feeding directions regularly, cling to the old fashioned baby-bed. European beds are expensive, while the home made Uzbek bed is cheap and ingenious. It is a long board, padded, and placed on a rocker; the baby is tightly strapped to it with many bands so that he lies unmoving all day long while his little skull flattens under the pressure. He is not even unbound for nursing; the mother leans over and lifts the whole rocker to her breast. The bed is elaborately quilted, and to avoid the diaper problem, there is a round hole in the plank under the baby, into which a carved wooden tube, tightly fastened in place against his body, leads downward. This convenient labor saving device causes chafing and infections. But changing of linen is hard in a town supplied with water only by water carriers, so the Uzbek baby-bed persists for the sake of convenience, despite the doctor. Above the bed is a framework over which many heavy quilts are thrown, to shut the unhappy infant in, with his cries and his odors. In the blazing heat of Bokhara summers, where the thermometer reaches 150 Fahrenheit in the sun-baked

streets, what wonder that Uzbek babies fail to survive.

Besides the Baby Consultations, there are women's *artels*, collective workshops where the members sew on order for government trusts, dividing their income in proportion to the hours worked. Most of the women cannot read, yet they elect their own management and revision committee. A class for reading and writing is held after work. There are women's club buildings in some of the chief cities —with rest-rooms, and Mothers Consultation, and Legal Aid, and many class rooms. Women sit in the courts, and are elected to city Soviets; women are even in the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbek Republic.

To counteract the modernizing propaganda of the communists, the *mullahs* have their own gospel. In the southern part of the Uzbek Republic a woman prophet has appeared, under the picturesque name of the Rising Moon. With the blessing of the local religious dignitaries, she holds meetings of women, reminding them of their duty as wives. "The emotion of a wife's soul must strictly correspond to that of her husband," runs her teaching. "If he is merry,

she also must be merry; if her lord is sad, let her with looks and sentiments share his woes. . . .

"Oh, my sisters! great is the power of the husband over his obedient wife. Wherefore, when a wife is seriously ill, let her husband strike her on the back and say: 'Ye evil ones, who lead mankind into trouble, begone at once from this beautiful body!' Then the devil, which dwells between skin and flesh especially to torment her, will leave immediately. . . . But only if she is a true wife, submissive to her husband.

"A man must not be soft nor come under his wife's influence," continues the message of the Rising Moon. "From time to time let him make her feel that he is the head of the household, by appropriate chastisement or even blows but not in such manner as to injure permanently."

All the resources of terror that religion offers, are brought to bear with eloquence upon the women hearers. "When the sun shall burn out, when the stars shall fall, when the hills shall move, when the seas shall boil, when souls ascend in steam, when the lists of men are read, when the heavens are open and the fires of hell await—then shall every soul

give an account of itself on the Terrible Judgment Day. . . . Fear that hour, O my sisters! Do not unveil your faces before men, as counsel the wicked Bolsheviks. Do not draw down on yourselves the wrath of God. . . ."

From the terrible Judgment Day to "veils for women" may seem to the West incongruous, but it is deadly in effectiveness in Central Asia. By the Mohammedan clergy, the Rising Moon is hailed as a prophetess, sent in these degenerate later days to save the old traditions. On her side is the custom of a thousand years, supported by the older men and women, who are by no means convinced that the new women's freedom is good. Very deadly is their effect on the young life under their influence.

In the midst of the Turkestan deserts the young girl bride Aloliat threw herself under a train. She loved her husband and wished only to cling to him; he in his turn passionately desired to keep her. But the customs of her land cried shame upon her. She had been married without the necessary *kalym*, or purchase money. A handsome farm hand won her heart by the unexplainable gifts wherewith men in all ages have won women. She knew that a farm

hand has never money enough to pay *kalym;* only by working seven years for a bride, as Jacob did, can he satisfy her parents. Aloliat was sixteen years old; she did not wish to wait seven years. She took advantage of the new Soviet laws, slipped out of the family home and went with her lover to the Soviet registration bureau.

Aloliat was legally married, but it availed her nothing in the eyes of the village. Her parents were furious; they had received no payment for the long years they had fed and cared for her. All the neighborhood sided with the parents; they called her the "no-account, who cheated her family." They spat upon her in the streets, shouting, "Worthless one, whom no one paid for." Under the scorn of the village, poor Aloliat had no martyr spirit to sustain her; no high conviction but only a luckless passion had led her to one act of defiance. Illiterate, dark, despairing, unsustained by any new propaganda from the distant cities, she escaped from social contempt under the wheels of a locomotive. On an Eastern woman, bred to submission in a collective society, the pressure of mass opinion is strong beyond the comprehension of the West.

It is frequently not the husband who opposes the young wife's freedom; often he himself desires it, against the wishes of the older members of his family. A tragic, yet humorous tale of the despairing attempt of two young people to defy the control of the old folks, comes from the town of Termes, on the border of Afghanistan. A happy pair was divorced against its will, because the young man wished to educate his bride.

A poor but energetic boy in a small village received a government scholarship and returned home a few years later the proud possessor of a government job. He applied for the hand of a wealthy farmer's daughter, and the farmer, not unwilling to ally himself with an official, gave the girl without even demanding *kalym*. The only drawback to bliss was the young man's mother, who by custom ruled his household. A devout woman, bitterly opposed to her son's modern views, she resolved that the new wife should not follow her husband, but should rather reclaim him to the orthodox faith. The bride was a docile Central Asian maiden, submissive to every one, willing to obey either husband or mother-in-law. But the orders she received were

contradictory. The young man at last announced that he had been given a job in the town of Termes, and would take his wife thither, teach her to read and unveil her, "in order that he might have a companion in life's hard struggle."

The mother was loud in her outcries; she appealed for help to the bride's family. When the youth returned from Termes where he had secured a home for his bride, he was met by a family council of all men relatives. His girl wife wept: "They will kill us if you persist." He decided to escape by night with his wife, but found her chamber guarded by a watch of women, organized by the two mothers. Losing all patience, he hired a wagon, loaded his possessions into it and brought his wife to the door. At once she was set upon by a mob of fifteen veiled women, who tore her clothes from her, forcing her to retire, shamed and weeping, into the house. Before the youth could bring police protection from the town, the girl was removed to her father's harem, which he might not enter.

Propositions for divorce now reached the husband from the wife's family. He pretended to consent, hoping to get his wife into the public hearing and

there take possession of her. But the bride's relatives were too shrewd for him. By bribes to the local authorities, and by bringing the girl under escort of the men of the family, they had the divorce registered before the young people could say a word. Baffled, despairing, unable to speak to his wife, the young man returned to his job in Termes.

Here, after some weeks, a pitiful message reached him. His illiterate girl bride, unable even to write, bribed with her jewels a servant to take him word that her family intended to marry her off to a wealthy middle-aged man. "But I will die," she said, "before I will go to any man but you." Half distracted, the young man appealed to one government authority after another. Every one liked him; every one gave him sympathy. But the girl was divorced; she lived in the harem of her father; there was not even a writing to show that she resented her fate. Even the Soviet Government, which is not too scrupulous about exerting its power, balked at invading a Moslem home in a distant village on no more evidence than the youth could give.

Thus in the homes of the Uzbeks, new law is often beaten by ancient custom. Custom is a thousand

years strong. The new laws have existed less than a decade. But the young generation has taken up the battle which might daunt more experienced fighters. They war against polygamy, against child marriage, against marriage by purchase, against the veil, against all that has been most respectable in the past. They fight for women's equality, women's education, women's share as a citizen in the new world to be created.

*Martyrs for*
*Women's Rights*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE fight for women's freedom in Soviet Central Asia is cruel and bloody, as are all wars between new law and entrenched custom. The Central Government supports the women; its laws prohibit child marriage, marriage by purchase, and polygamy; its propagandists encourage unveiling. Yet hardly a month passes without the news that in some distant village a woman has been murdered, by religious fanatics or the men of her own household, because of her struggle for freedom. The Uzbeks of the rural districts look lightly upon such slayings. The man has been in their eyes perhaps too sensitive in defending his family honor. But criminal? How so? May not a man do as he will with his own? To kill a neighbor's woman is punishable, as it is to kill a neighbor's cattle. But a man's own wife belongs to him as his own property. Only slowly and with struggle is this ancient view overthrown.

"At the last vacations," a Tashkent student told me, "our young folks' organization selected from its

members those who should go down and agitate in certain villages. We sent one girl to a village not far from the city. Next morning she was returned to us in a peasant cart, cut in small pieces. These words accompanied the body: 'This is your women's freedom!'

"We held a great funeral for her in the native city of Tashkent. Fifty thousand marched to honor her. Many wives of *ishans*[1] left them on that day, for it was well known that the murder was incited by the clergy." Thus is the movement nourished by the blood of martyrs.

Worse than death sometimes awaits the women agitators. Especially brutal was the fate meted out to the bride of the village secretary in Yan-Kabak. She not only unveiled herself, but had the daring to choose as husband a revolutionary farm hand rather than a local bey who desired her. When her husband became secretary of the village Soviet, the gentry of the village took their revenge on the woman. A group of seventeen men attacked her in the eighth month of pregnancy, violated her in turn, killed her and threw her body in the river. For this peculiarly

[1] High Mohammedan clergy.

horrible murder no one was executed. The local courts condemned the three instigators to death, but the murderers had influence and their sentence was commuted to imprisonment.

In one locality nine murders of women occurred before any were discovered. The local authorities took part in them and carefully concealed them from the central government. At last one summer there came to the district Gul Bazar, a woman medical student, giving her vacations to educate other women. She opened a school to teach women to read. When she found that the local officials refused to send their wives, she began to denounce them for their reactionary ideas. Infuriated at the thought that a woman dare criticize them, the local officials lost all caution. They aroused the town against her and lynched her. The woman student was known to the higher authorities; her death was investigated. Thus it was learned that the local officials had murdered nine women who had been agitators for freedom.

Even the attempt of a woman to get justice is often met by local vengeance. An organizer of the Women's Section, going into a country district, was

approached by an old woman who asked for justice against peasants for violating her daughter. A physician established the fact of rape. But a few days later, the mother who made the complaint was found murdered. Appeals to the local authorities for an investigation of the case, met only the suave reply that "the orphan is now cared for." They made no move whatever to investigate the murder.

Sometimes, when daughters are too energetic in their search for freedom, the whole family assists in the murder. Such was the case of Ulugai, a girl of seventeen who decided to learn to read. Her husband (for of course she had a husband), her mother and family opposed her by pleading and later by beatings. Nothing daunted, she ran away to the city and entered a boarding school, securing a divorce from the Soviet courts. The family decided to capitalize her divorce by selling her again in marriage; they invited her home for a visit and then imprisoned her. Again she escaped, but she was still foolishly trustful, and consented to see her mother and sister at the house of a city friend. Hardly had she left the gates of the school when the men of her family seized her. On the way home

they murdered her, cut off her head and buried it. They were arrested, confessed to the crime and were given ten years' imprisonment. The mother and sister who enticed Ulugai to her death were given six years.

Equally tragic is the tale of Rahima. In 1926, her family sold her to Abdullah, but she ran away before marriage and hid with her sister in an adjoining village. The intended bridegroom organized a party of friends and stormed the house, violated the girl and carried her for ten days from place to place. Finding her still obdurate and fearing the new laws, he at last returned her to her parents. Rahima went to court but got no aid, though the kidnaping and violence were established.

Two years later came the bloody sequel. Rahima, now a thorough modernist and seventeen years old, married a young government employee named Sultan. The angry Abdullah planned revenge. He learned that certain land claims made it necessary for Rahima to visit Samarkand. She went accompanied by her sister, her husband and her sister's husband. Abdullah gave a feast and organized his friends to help avenge him on the woman who had flouted him.

When Rahima's party got off the train on their return, Abdullah's band attacked them and killed three, seriously wounding the fourth. For this crime the local court considered a ten-year sentence enough.

An odd device has been adopted by the Women's Section of Central Asia to increase the penalties against murderers of women. Since it is hard to convince an Uzbek court that the killing of a woman is a capital offense, the crime is given the new designation of "counter-revolution," and the murderers are accused of "committing a terrorist act against an agent of the revolution." However lightly Asia may deal with wife-murder, all Asia has known for a thousand years that crimes against government are serious matters. Under this new interpretation, a woman who fights for freedom becomes the property not of her husband but of a protecting government, which will demand the death penalty for the murder of its servants. In the name of this more serious charge, wife murderers are to-day sometimes executed in Central Asia.

In spite of these many difficulties, the women's fight for freedom wins spectacular victories. In the citadel of Old Bokhara itself, high shrine of Moslem

fanaticism, the streets and public assemblies are full of unveiled women. Women take part in voting; they organize coöperative societies; they manage their own workshops; they even sit in court as people's "co-judges." Year by year, and very rapidly, the women grow more self-confident. Many sit in the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbek Republic; Shadiva, a girl of twenty-two, is in its highest council, the Presidium.

In the ancient city of Samarkand the secretary of the women's organization, Zhukova, told me the history of the struggle. "It was very hard at first," she said. "We Russians began to organize the fight in 1921-22. But we had no points of contact with the native women, no women's clubs, no day nurseries or baby consultations. We began to hold little talks with a few veiled women, speaking to them of freedom. During the first few years we made little progress. In 1924, there were only ten unveiled women in the entire Uzbek nation; we guarded them as the apples of our eye against murder. No women worked in factories; for a woman to come even to a club meeting was dangerous.

"To-day, in 1928, we have nearly a hundred

Mother and Baby Consultations in Central Asia. We have thirty-four women's club buildings, with two paid workers or more in each, and twenty-six 'red corners,' which are smaller clubs with only one paid worker. In Kokand our women's club house, in a remodeled building, has rest room, auditorium, consultation, club and class rooms; it offers legal advice and nursing care. Silk filature mills are opening and women are getting jobs in them. A new world is beginning.

"Over twenty thousand women to-day hold some elected public position. Some of these are 'people's co-judges,' and some are members of village Soviets. Twenty-one are presidents of village Soviets; sixteen are members of the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbek Republic. Nearly one hundred are on the boards of management of Coöperatives. There are one hundred and three Women's Exchanges where they sell the products of their handiwork. By the former custom, the husband took his wife's work and sold it in the market, using the money as he chose. But to-day we are striving to raise the economic value of woman even within the household.

"In silk culture, for instance, the women do all the labor; but always in the past the men have bought the eggs and mulberry leaves and sold the cocoons. This year we succeeded in paying the money direct into the hands of the woman grower in about one-tenth of the cases. Next year it is government policy to conclude all such contracts direct with the woman, giving her the eggs and the credits. One purpose in this, in which all government agencies are required to aid us, is to raise the woman's status as a human being in the household—she who was formerly merely a piece of livestock.

"Our chief task now is to fight the ancient custom of bride purchase and child marriage, to educate women, and to bring them out of the homes into factories where they may have training in citizenship. We have to-day eighty-two women's *artels*, collective working groups doing dairying, farming, and chicken raising; one hundred *artels* of silk making; and fifty of cotton pickers. In such groups the women elect their own management and share their income according to the work done. Fifty-four *artels* are doing handicraft work. To other groups

we are teaching the California method of fruit-drying. Ten thousand women are to-day in schools for reading and writing."

In view of all these achievements, it is not surprising that the State Cinema of the Uzbeks thought it was giving the women's movement well deserved praise when it produced a film entitled, "Women of Uzbekistan." It portrayed women working in farm coöperatives, in dairy and handicraft *artels*, spending their free time in schools and libraries, driving tractors, sowing and picking cotton, working on complicated machines. Very naïvely the State Cinema, believing that it had done a good piece of propaganda, invited the officials of the Women's Section of the Party to a private showing. They were rapidly disillusioned; the Women's Section requested that the film be prohibited until properly amended.

"Have the Uzbek women really succeeded in creating a hundred percent socialist state without a male in it?" they asked caustically. "This your picture seems to show. No doubt there are women engaged in all these activities, but let us have balance and truth. The fight for women's freedom is

cruel and bloody. We need not sweet flattery but sharp weapons." They proceeded to publish the cases of rape and murder which followed the agitation of women in backward districts. They proved their contention that all was not ready-made idyllic and undramatic.

Achievements point to the future. Among the women presidents of village Soviets is Makul-Oi, a woman of forty-eight. At her age the average Uzbek woman has attained old age and the rule of her daughters-in-law, sitting enthroned by the warm stove, entrenched, sipping tea, bargaining for a rich *kalym* in return for her marriageable daughters. Thus might Makul-Oi have lived had not a women's agitator visited her village three years ago, to hold a meeting.

One deathless phrase Makul-Oi remembered from the speaker, the words of Lenin about women: "Every kitchen maid must learn to rule the state." A marvelously strange gospel, from an almost legendary teacher of the far northwest in Russia. Surely he was a great prophet, for behold his followers rule after him. In the heart of Makul-Oi the message gleamed like a jewel, gazed at often and

considered. Though a woman of forty-eight, she went to school and slowly the alphabet yielded to her its mysteries. Then she unveiled and urged other women to do likewise.

Time went on. Makul-Oi joined the Communist Party; she organized a group of women about her, newly unveiled, who could read a little. They elected her a member of the local Soviet, under which came eleven small scattered villages. When the men mocked at the women's demand for public improvements, Makul-Oi led forth her band one morning and began to repair a bridge outside the village. Unveiled, with faces red from unaccustomed labor, the women toiled silently under the jests of the village men, till the latter were seized with shame and took spades and mattocks to finish the job themselves. Makul-Oi divided both women and men into competing companies, and sent them to repair other small bridges, washed out by the floods. In a few days, seven bridges were finished. The local Soviet began to take pride in its own energy; they repaired, under her driving, twelve kilometers of road; they became locally famous. Makul-Oi was made president.

The eleven villages over which Makul-Oi rules are scattered across fifteen kilometers of country. This woman of forty-eight is often seen walking from village to village, since there are no funds to hire horses. She supports herself from her own tiny plot of land, worked by herself and her daughter; she receives not one kopek from all her work in the villages. But under her the land taxes were collected two months after harvest, a record shown by few localities; subscriptions to the government loan reached five thousand roubles higher than the allotment for her region. All other directions sent from the district government are carried out rapidly.

The beys of the district hate Makul-Oi. They attacked her one night in her house, knocking her to the floor and kicking her in the face and body, until they left her senseless. On another occasion when her only daughter was returning home in the early evening, a former bandit, son of a rich bey, attempted to seize the girl, and she barely escaped, shrieking and in tears, to her mother. The dauntless Makul-Oi went straight to the house of the attacker; hardly had she entered when she was felled to the ground and cruelly beaten. The district court

to which she brought the case, dismissed it for lack of corroborating witness.

Then at last the simple peasants of her eleven villages, who had seemed to take her labors casually and slightingly, showed what they thought of their woman president. With delegations and outraged protests, they carried the matter to the G.P.U., the political police of the Soviet Republic. On their complaints the hooligan ex-bandit was finally arrested. Makul-Oi had won the devotion of her district; she had shown what heroism and ability and energy may lie in the hidden veiled women of Asia. For Makul-Oi, though exceptional, is by no means alone in her achievements. There are twenty-one women presidents in the villages of Central Asia. That many kitchen maids who have learned to rule the state.

Of all the milestones which mark the struggle of Central Asian women for freedom, the most unique and spectacular was the mass unveiling in Holy Bokhara, which took place in a few days of March, 1928. "It was one of those historic events which occur only once in a lifetime," said a Russian woman who saw it. Bokhara was the highest citadel of Islam in

Central Asia. Fanaticism was most entrenched here; yet here the women's unveiling took place more completely than anywhere else.

The campaign was managed by the Women's Section of the Communist Party which, like women's sections of dominant political groups anywhere, has ceased to concern itself with upheaval, and manages all kinds of activities for women in the interest of awakening them, organizing them and attaching them to the state. Pressure was first brought to bear on the men, through the party and the government. Government employees and party members were expected to unveil their wives; otherwise they were "not modern." Later the propaganda filtered down to trade unions. Side by side with this went on agitation among the women themselves.

There followed discussions in all the "Gusar Meetings," those neighborhood gatherings which are the lowest cell of the city government in Old Bokhara. Agitators and doctors explained that the veil injured the health of women. Tuberculosis is especially prevalent among them, because they are cut off from sun and air. Eye troubles are frequent, on account of the veil. Most of all they announced

that women were citizens, and must unveil in order to take part in social and civic life.

Individual unveiled women began to appear in the streets of Bokhara. Several such cases were followed by murders, as outraged males avenged their family honor, or religious fanatics maintained the tenets of Islam. Spots where such murders took place are to-day pointed out as martyr shrines, by the young modernists. But at first these murders were not even punished; public opinion supported the slayers. The women themselves were hardly in favor of freedom; the older women fought all signs of it in their daughters and daughters-in-law.

So far the campaign in Bokhara resembled that in other cities. But early in 1928, plans were made for a great mass demonstration, which should take place on International Women's Day, March the seventh. The women already unveiled were organized. Many even of the veiled women were drawn into public contacts through Mothers' Consultations or collective workshops; all of these were prepared for the coming great event. It was rumored throughout the city that there would be much unveiling on the holiday.

*A Picnic, Branded as Anti-Religious Since Men Attend With Unveiled Women of Their Families*

Early in March the excitement began. The streets were hung with red streamers, mingled with colorful family rugs. The few automobiles in the city were turned over to organizations of young folks, who made speeches from them at street corners, boys and girls together. Excitement grew tenser. On the eve of March seventh, mass meetings of women filled all the halls of the city. In the new People's House, built since the Revolution, was a central mass meeting of 3,000 women. A participant described it to me.

"They could not keep quiet even to hear the speakers from Moscow. They shouted, stamped, tore their veils from their faces and threw them toward the platform. Every one tore at the veils as they passed by. On the platform the speakers seized the veils and tore them into many strips, amid shouts of 'Long Live Women's Freedom.' Out into the streets the women poured, in torchlight processions, burning the veils. All next day the frenzy continued. Piles of veils were heaped as offerings in front of the speakers in the automobiles, in front of government and party headquarters."

On the tenth of March, when excitement was at a

climax, an unveiled woman was murdered by her husband and husband's brother. Such murders had happened before, unpunished. But now the women were aroused; it was easy for the Women's Section to organize demonstrations, demanding that the murderers be executed. There followed a "demonstration trial" as it is known in the Soviet Union, a trial with large public attendance in which "an example" is made. Amid much commotion and demonstrations and resolutions, the murderers were condemned to death and executed. From that time women have walked unveiled in holiest Bokhara. I saw them often in the streets. They are not bold; they draw their shawls a little across their faces as they pass among men. But the hideous black *paranja* no longer shuts them from the world.

Some dramatic emotion like this seems needed to overthrow ancient custom in Central Asia. Outside Bokhara the movement has gone more slowly. There are cities where three hundred women unveiled, but where, as propaganda relaxes, they return to veils once more. Campaigns on behalf of the veil are waged by the Mohammedan clergy,

which have succeeded in imposing the *paranja* on hitherto unveiled nomad women. There is a satirical verse sung by young Uzbeks:

> "On the seventh of March I tore off my veil,
> But before I reached home
> I bought three new *paranjas*
> To veil myself more darkly."

Many women, as the song indicates, find it easy to claim freedom in a mass meeting and hard to face their husbands.

But there are fiery fighters among the younger women. They know what the cost of agitating is, and they are prepared to pay. I spent several days in a school in Samarkand where forty-five selected girls from distant villages were taking a year's course in order to go home and organize women. Some brought their nursing babies to the nearby children's home, and slipped out between classes to care for them. I visited another school where the girls study to be kindergarten teachers. They sang me many songs of woman's freedom.

A slip of a girl, barefoot, tense with enthusiasm, sang me the song written by the women of her village

in honor of Zulfia Khan. "Zulfia Khan," she explained, "was a great fighter for freedom. She was against child marriage; she was against a man having six and seven wives; she was against the veil. Therefore her husband, aided by the *mullahs*, came to the house where she was sleeping and poured kerosene on the house and burned her in it. The women of the village made this lament for her:"

"O Woman, the world will not forget you and your fight for freedom.
Your flame—let them not think that in it you were consumed.
Your flame in which you burned is a torch in our hands.
You fought against darkness and they put you down in the dark;
But your cry: 'Away with the veil,' remains in the sun."

As the thin flame of a girl chanted these words, eagerly happy to find in me a listener, the other girls of the normal school gathered round her. Awkward, shabby, some of them barely literate, they also were afire. They had their local songs and their village traditions of heroism. They were preparing to go back into the same dark villages and follow Zulfia Khan.

"Flower of the East," they sang, "the hour has
come
To cast off the veil and the *paranja.*
Hear me, you learners of the Red East!
For a thousand years you slept in darkness under
the yoke.
When you awake, when you rise from deep sleep,
The Workers of the world await you."

*Dramatizing*
*Justice*

## CHAPTER TWELVE

WHEN a land is in social transition, the most obvious picture of its changes are likely to be found in the court records. Here the struggle between new law and ancient custom goes on most dramatically—crime, evasion, sentence, reveal the conflict. This is especially true in Central Asia, where these civil courts themselves are the creations of the Revolution, replacing the old religious courts of the Mohammedan clergy. The new Soviet laws attack uncompromisingly practices which have grown hoary with respectability: polygamy, child marriage, bride purchase, all of which were honored forms of matrimony in the past. All are to-day illegal. Yet they are practiced—and come into court occasionally.

Citizen Aituganof, a nomad owner of cattle, came to the Soviet court for one of the most ancient reasons—revenge on the man who ruined him. Seeking a bride for his son, he had asked for the daughter of Sovranof, another nomad, but the latter de-

clared that his girl was worth six hundred roubles *kalym*. Such a sum Aituganof found grossly excessive especially as under the new Soviet laws "girls aren't worth anything at all." Sovranof held to the sum demanded, and as a gesture in bargaining, Aituganof began to pay it. He gave the girl's father two horses, a cow, some sheep and six hundred pounds of rice, after each payment requesting the maiden. Her father stood firm; not yet, he declared, according to his estimate of values, had the *kalym* reached the sum demanded.

The aged Aituganof at last declared himself bankrupt; more than this he could not give for his son's bride. "Either give me the girl or return the *kalym*," he issued his ultimatum. Such certainly were the requirements of ancient custom. But Sovranof, since the whole transaction was illegal, decided to keep both gifts and maiden, knowing that his victim could hardly complain without implicating himself also. But he misjudged the desire for vengeance which soon filled the heart of Aituganof. Thoroughly outraged, the victim went to the Soviet courts, declared his own sin in giving the *kalym* but maintained that the sin of Sovranof, who had

demanded it, was greater. The courts agreed. They imposed on Sovranof a fine of six hundred roubles and six months' imprisonment for demanding the *kalym*, and to round out the measure of justice they also gave a sentence of one month to the *giver of kalym*, Aituganof.

The old courts of Central Asia were managed by the higher Mohammedan clergy; the essential prerequisite for becoming a *cazi*, or judge, was a knowledge of the Koran with all the recent interpretations given to it by learned divines, and such additional fillips as the temporal monarch desired. There was no criminal code, no bill of rights. The judge was expected to move according to his personal "conscience," and his friendship was a thing to be openly sought with presents. The judge, or *cazi*, gave presents in his turn and costly banquets to all the elders and important citizens in the district where he expected appointment, so that when the time came they might confirm the choice of the upper clergy regarding him. Many were the perquisites of a *cazi*, among others the right of handling all estates of minors, which were not always returned in after years to their true owners. Justice in the East has

always been personal; and the East has never failed to admire tales of clever judges, like the one of Solomon and the parentage of the baby; it has sympathized with romantic judges, those who championed the outcast. The conception of an impersonal law code and a judge in theory unmoved by emotion is alien to Central Asia. So tradition remains even in the Soviet law courts, which in so many respects differ completely from their predecessors. The judge is still expected to rely on his "revolutionary conscience," more to be an agent of the social revolution than to maintain an impartial aloofness.

Workers and peasants to-day sit on the benches, elected to the post by local government bodies. Most of them are very new at the job. A survey of the courts late in 1927 showed that of 372 court officials, only 19 had had three years' experience, and 275 had been in office less than a year. It is not surprising that many of their cases are appealed and that one-third of these appeals are granted. However, short study courses in the criminal and civil code are offered under the Departments of Justice and persons elected to local judgeships are more and more taking these courses, in the hope of continuing

their career. Judges to-day are undoubtedly more experienced than they were even last year.

Beside the regular judges who serve on salary, and who are increasingly expected to have some training for the job, there are the co-judges, who perform a function somewhat like that of jury. They are assumed to represent the "people's conscience," and are taken from a panel prepared by various social organizations; the trade unions and peasants' associations play an important part in their selection. The co-judges serve for six days, or until the end of the case on which they are engaged. They receive a fee from the court if they are unemployed; but if they are taken from regular jobs, their employers must continue their wages during their days of court duty. Three co-judges sit in each case; between them and the regular judge there must be unanimous agreement in order to reach a decision.

These new "decree courts," as they are called, operated side by side with the old religious courts until 1923, when the latter were abolished. Due to the urging of communists and women's organizations, large numbers of women have been selected for the post of co-judge. In nearly every trial there

is one woman sitting in judgment. Yet so strong has remained the tradition of "veils for women," that till recently the women co-judges often came veiled to court, removed their veils during the performance of their public duty, and then swathed themselves completely before going out on the streets.

Since most of the inhabitants of Central Asia are illiterate, and since it is communist policy to establish local self-government immediately, without waiting for education, it follows that a large proportion of the co-judges cannot read or write. Frequently, all that they know of crime and punishment comes from the old traditions of "Koran law"; they take their ignorance into Soviet courts and often make ridiculous decisions.

Kooldashef, an honest and hard-working local official, was brought into court by his enemies and given several years' jail sentence as penalty for a series of acts. He appealed, and the nature of his "crimes" was made manifest in a higher court. He had gone into the house of Juraef, where sat the latter's wife; he had seated himself and conversed with the two together. This was a crime in the old code

of Central Asia—to speak with an unveiled woman in her home. Kooldashef found a lost goat in the hills. He took it home, kept it for several days, and when no owner appeared, sold it. No claim was made that he kept the money for himself; as village president, he considered his findings village property and the sale was recorded in the books of the *Ispolkom*. But—Kooldashef had omitted to have the sale announced by the town crier in the bazaar on market day as was the custom. When shown his fault, he tried to remedy it. He sought the buyer of the goat in order to get it back and resell it properly; but meantime the goat had died.

At an evening party, where wine flowed plentifully, Kooldashef had overurged good liquor upon a guest who chanced to be descended from a priestly family; the holy man had become drunk. This also was a crime under the old Koran law, to furnish wine to a member of the clergy; for this alone a two years' sentence was given. On another occasion, Kooldashef saw two men going into the house of a woman who engaged in prostitution with her husband's consent. He called the men to the *Ispolkom*, lectured them on the evils of prostitution, and then

went to the woman's house, brought her and her husband also to the *Ispolkom*, and urged them to give up the evil trade. He was charged with arresting people without warrant, though technically he had made no arrest, but had merely ordered the couple to accompany him. For this "crime" the local court gave him three years. A higher court threw out all the accusations and freed Kooldashef.

The lower courts show an interesting tendency to regard facts without inquiring into criminal motive. Under the head of "Too Many Mistakes," the *Pravda Vostoka* published a series of such decisions, which were reversed by the higher courts after considerable trouble to the victims. A motion picture operator accidentally set fire to a building, which burned down. He was charged with the serious crime of arson. No one accused him of intending to burn the building; but to the fatalistic minds of the lower court, intentions didn't seem to matter. The building was burnt, wasn't it; and by his act? Some one should be punished.

The manager of a warehouse received over the telephone an order from his superior officer to send a carload of goods to a certain address. He misunder-

stood the address, and sent the car to the wrong place. Later, the whole order was canceled anyway; it had been a mistake in the higher office. But meantime, the car was missent; valuable time and freight costs were lost. The manager of the warehouse was convicted of "sabotage" by a court which was well aware that he had no criminal intent. He did it, didn't he? Does not fate punish the acts of man and not his motives? No doubt the local court was trying to emulate the ways of Allah!

Dastia, the head of the southern branch of the Kirghiz Trading Company, gave out goods on credit to private merchants. In so doing he followed a custom already established when he took the post. But some of the private merchants went bankrupt under the competition of the coöperatives (which the communists devoutly hope will happen). Others were late in their payments. Dastia was given a year in jail for the loss to the company through his action. This case also was reversed on appeal.

Nahtman, the assistant manager of a regional coöperative, got a notice from the post office that a valuable package had arrived. He wrote an authorization for a messenger to get it; this was coun-

tersigned by the manager. The messenger brought the packet, threw it on a table, and it was never seen afterwards. The two men who signed the authorization were held criminally liable by the lower courts and given a year in jail, a sentence from which they only escaped by appeal.

The cases thus cited show law in the making. Backward, literal minded local courts which follow the arbitrary ways of the East in their punishments must be taught by reversals the difference between mistakes and felonies. Another type of court case illustrates how ancient Asia, which has always managed to turn the law to profit, tries to take advantage of the new Soviet code also. The laws devised for the protection of women are not infrequently used by clever women for an unjust advantage.

There was Yakovleva, for instance, who sold her house. According to law, since she could not read or write, her husband signed the contract in her presence. A few years later, having spent the money, they wanted the house again. With clever indirection, Yakovleva first brought a charge in the criminal court against her husband for having

"robbed her." She declared that he sold her house against her will, and that furthermore he had no legal right to sign for her, since she was not illiterate. (She had learned to write in the meantime.) The husband "repentantly" admitted his guilt in court, and received a month's sentence, combined with amnesty on probation. A few weeks later, armed with this official record, Yakovleva brought suit against the purchaser of the house who had obtained it, she said, "by force and fraud." The lower court gave the house back to her, and she would have kept it had not the purchaser already mortgaged it to the Cotton Trust. This powerful organization, seeking to learn why they got no payments on their mortgage, found that its supposed owner had been ousted. They investigated further, found the deceit and had the case reversed.

Amazing statements are sometimes made in the court. Daria Popovka, for instance, made the following claim for the support of her child: "Since May, 1925," she attested, "I have lived as wife to Vassili Balakin, and since September of the same year I have lived also with Andrea, his brother, by

whom I had a son, Victor, born in July, 1927. I therefore ask that the court compel Andrea to support his child."

A Soviet court imposes no punishment, not even that of a reprimand, on a confession of such immorality. Its business was to find the father and make him pay. Vassili, the husband, admitted his wife unfaithful, stating that they had concealed it from the neighbors to avoid scandal. Andrea, however, firmly denied the charge; but he had the testimony of both the woman and her husband against him. The court, however, investigated further. The neighbors testified that Andrea had boarded with his brother's family, but that no one had ever seen any improper conduct. It was found that Vassili had registered his marriage with Daria and had registered the birth of the baby as his own son. He had never thrown doubts on the child's parentage until he was out of work, while Andrea had a good job as doctor's assistant, paying 225 roubles a month. It seemed to the court less likely to be a love affair than a joint attempt of husband and wife to get money out of Andrea. They ruled that Andrea's parentage was not proven, and not

even likely, and that he need pay no "alimony" to his brother's wife.

The most significant trials in Central Asia to-day are the "propaganda trials," held to arouse and educate the masses. No greater contrast could be imagined to the Anglo-Saxon theory of cool, impartial justice, which assumes that the judge must remain forever above the battle. In the "show-trials," not only does the judge descend to take part in the battle, but all local political and social organizations are incited to dramatize the proceedings. Civilian bodies pass resolutions demanding the highest penalty. The trial itself is held in a large hall, or even in the open air, and by the size of the attendance is reckoned the measure of its success.

A "propaganda trial" is an ordinary criminal case which for certain reasons the government has decided to use for purposes of public education. Usually there is no question about the guilt; in most cases the criminal has admitted his acts and had perhaps even been glorified for them by his neighbors. He has perhaps killed his wife, since she began agitating for women's freedom. Local opinion excuses him for it. The problem of the court is not to prove

the murder, but to convince the public that it is a crime to kill a woman. They stage a "show-trial" for this purpose.

Such was the case of Nur Ali, who killed his wife in the village of Zengi-Ata, with the connivance of several devout Mohammedan friends. All the village knew of it; the real dispute was whether a man acted criminally or rightly in slaying a woman who dishonored his house by unveiling. The aim of the trial, which took place before an audience of 5,000 peasants in the open air, was to convince the population that agitating women must not be interfered with. Women's delegations came from surrounding villages bearing resolutions. The verdict was, as expected, a severe one. The murderer was condemned to death; his two friends who were present and left the woman to her fate got three years in jail; two other friends with whom the husband discussed his plans and who did not try to dissuade him, got one year in jail; and a bystander who accidentally saw the murder and did not report it to the authorities, got six months in jail. The verdict, when announced, met with applause, and this was considered not a breach of decorum to be repri-

manded, but a sign of success. The peasants had been, to that extent, converted to the new laws. The success of the trial was still further shown by the fact that the peasants at once held a mass meeting, and decided to rename their village Aloliat-Bibi, after the murdered woman.

A "show-trial" was held against the woman Azimbaeva in the native city of Tashkent. She sold her twelve year old daughter in marriage to wealthy, middle-aged Rusu Mohammed. By threats and beatings she tried to make the girl accept the transaction and when these failed she inveigled her daughter to the home of Mohammed, who violated and imprisoned her. After some weeks the girl managed to send out a statement of what had happened. The mother's acts had been both lawful and honorable under ancient custom, and if she had been a simple, ignorant woman, the courts would have taken this fact into account. But Azimbaeva was a member of the Communist Party, and a delegate of the Women's Section sitting in the city government of Tashkent. As such she undoubtedly "knew better," since she herself took part in agitation against child marriage and the purchase of brides. On account

of this fact, a "show-trial" was held in the Trade Union Hall, where she was accused of being a "procuress," of which she was technically guilty. Before crowds of applauding modernists, both the mother and the lawless bridegroom got a three year sentence while the girl was sent to a boarding school.

When any special type of crime becomes notoriously prevalent, the authorities are apt to decide that the public conscience needs stirring, or perhaps information, by a "show-trial." Even quite minor matters, such as wage disputes, may be thus featured, if there has been a wave of them. During my visit to Tashkent a special "show-session" was being held in the large hall of the Labor Temple to dispose of a series of violations of the labor code. It was an ordinary court sitting, held in this place for the sake of a large audience of workingmen, to acquaint them with their rights and the protection offered by the government.

The first case was a quarrel over a loss in wages. Two skilled mechanics, employed in the railway shops of the Central Asiatic Railway, had a year previously been accused by the management of stealing supplies. For this alleged offense they were de-

moted to the job of watching cars; they could not, of course, be fired without consent of the union, which would not be given until the accusation was proved. During the year a court held the mechanics not guilty, and ordered them reinstated in their former jobs. But this did not content them. They sued the railway for the difference in wages during their year of lessened pay. The Soviet Republic is no doubt the only country in the world where a workingman has such a claim legally. The railway management did not even dispute the right; they claimed, however, that the pay for the two jobs was the same, and that the workingmen had lost nothing financially by the transfer. The court, however, after careful inquiry into bonuses, piecework and overtime, found that the men in question had each lost 240 roubles by the transfer, and ordered it paid to them.

During the same session, a complaint was brought against the Red East Workshops, which employ both railway and industrial workers. Since the scale for industrial workers is higher, the unions had a collective agreement compelling the Red East Workshops to add 10 percent to the usual scale for rail-

way workers, in order to equalize them with their fellows who worked under the same conditions. One worker, however, the management of the shops chose on their own authority to interpret as an industrial worker, not a railway worker, and had not raised his wages. They did this without consulting either the union or the department of labor inspection. For thus exceeding their authority, the management of the Red East Workshops was fined 3,500 roubles which they were directed to pay, not into the government treasury, but into the unemployment fund of the aggrieved union. The purpose of such a "show-session" was to acquaint the workers of Tashkent with the detailed interpretation of the labor laws and their rights under them.

The class control of courts is obvious in Central Asia. When wealthy traders break the law the punishment is always more severe than it would be for poor peasants or workers. In the village of Jamba the big trader Sharibaef owned fourteen *tanaps* of land which were worked for him by two farm hands. During the "land reform" this estate was confiscated since it was not worked by its owner; it was given by the Land Commission to the two farm

hands. Actually, however, the situation remained unaltered; Sharibaef kept on collecting the harvest, terrorizing the farm hands into submission. He merely ceased giving them wages; often they were close to starvation. To their appeals for aid, he answered: "Soon I will get wives for you. You will receive women in return for your labor and all will be well." For two and a half years Sharibaef succeeding in cheating the farm hands in this manner. Then the regional committee of the Plowman's Association took it to court. At a "show-trial" attended by thousands, Sharibaef was given eight years in jail with confiscation of all his property.

For a somewhat different reason sentences passed on government officials and communist party members who break the law, are also unusually severe. Such a man, it is held, has not only broken the law, but has discredited the government in the eyes of the masses, which is far more serious. Alim Sigisbaef, a village president and a district judge, came before the court for a series of lawless actions. He had not paid his farm hand for more than a year; for this he received a year's sentence. He had forcibly married Tulan Nisi Bibi; he was given seven

years for "sexual relations by violence." As village president he had taken commissions for marriages and divorces, which are supposed to be given free; the sentence for this was two years. For having two wives, one taken since the law against polygamy, Alim was condemned to a year of forced labor. The sentences were pooled into seven years' imprisonment and three years' loss of voting rights thereafter.

These sentences of Alim and of Sharibaef are as severe as those given for an ordinary murder, committed by a backward peasant.[1] The reasons for such views of the relative seriousness of different crimes are clear. Soviet law is fighting against ancient custom on behalf of social revolution. A rich man who oppresses the poor and a government official who grafts, if these actions are continuous, is a graver social menace to the revolutionary program than one who once in his life commits a private murder.[2]

Nor does the Soviet judge hold even as a theoretical ideal, the view of impersonal justice held by

[1] See cases of Ulugai and Rahima in "Martyrs for Women's Rights."

[2] See chapter: "A Farm Hand President," for the president's views on this matter.

western politics. In Soviet theory, such a view is a delusion when it is not hypocrisy. The Soviet judge considers the court an agent of the Revolution. The oppressing trader or landlord thwarts the Revolution; the communist grafter, even more seriously, discredits it. Their punishment *must* be heavy. "Show-trials" are held the court's duty as revolutionary agents. Not merely to punish criminals, but to arouse public sentiment and make social change possible is the duty of the law giver.

*From Camels*
*to Airplanes*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RED autobuses run to-day in the streets of Samarkand by the tomb of Tamerlane. Two airplanes daily connect the ancient Khanate of Khiva with the Central Asian Railway. Far up in the forgotten Pamirs, the "roof of the world," mountaineers shut in by snow tune in on the Tashkent Radio to hear ancient Uzbek tunes. Into hidden villages which still believe in the ghouls of the Arabian Nights come motion picture photographers, snapping cotton festivals and reproducing them for the rural traveling cinema. Modern miracles replace the ancient magic.

There are postal stations to-day in Soviet Central Asia where airpost connects with camel post. A hundred miles or more from the end of the railways the airplanes land and toss their mail packets to waiting caravans. The sudden transition from camel to airplane without waiting for the intermediate steps of evolution, is characteristic of progress to-day in ancient Turkestan. It creates great strains —and great enthusiasms also.

Possibly airplanes are better appreciated here than in the more developed lands. In Europe and America where plane routes parallel the railways, the time of travel may be more than cut in half; in Central Asia, where airplane competes with horse and camel, it reduces the time to one-tenth. Travelers, for instance, to the renowned capital Khiva may choose; they may go in two weeks by road in winter weather, or in five hours by air. Visitors to Duschambe, the new and crudely booming capital of the Tadjiks, may zigzag back and forth in two days on local railways, and then go three or four days more by auto-truck if the rains have not washed out the bridges. By air they reach Duschambe in a single day from Tashkent via Samarkand and Termes. A two hour trip by air takes one from the railroad to Alma-Ata, once the place of Trotsky's exile; without the plane one travels two days by auto in good weather or travels not at all through the mountain mud if there is rain. There is to-day a two day airplane route from Tashkent to Kabul, the capital of the Afghans. Lacking this line one must travel three weeks on horse through bandit-ridden mountains.

For average citizens, however, time-saving by these air lines is often a fiction for frequently they wait two weeks to get a seat. So popular is air traffic that every line has waiting lists. Only important government officials, traveling by special order "out of turn," can count on an airplane on the day they decide to go. Others wait their turn, more or less patiently. Nobody ventures to predict when there will be airplanes enough to handle the traffic.

The shortage is merely one in a continuous series of shortages in Central Asia. One hundred and fifty million people throughout the Soviet Republic are awakening all at once to a hundred demands that they never felt before. The old, sluggish life of the Russian grain-grower and the Uzbek cotton-grower has been broken forever by the impact of world war, civil war and revolution. Through many channels knowledge pours in of the things the great world offers and of what men may desire. The resources of the Soviet Union, in capital, organization, machines and experts, are simply unable to produce fast enough to meet such growing demands.

One month there is a "crisis" in cotton goods; the next month in enamel ware. The sudden onslaught

of the rainy season produces forthwith a "crisis" in galoshes, and a stock local comparison becomes "as long as the waiting lines for rubbers in Tashkent." During my visit to Samarkand there was a temporary lack of kerosene. The actual shortage lasted only a day, but something not unlike a run on a bank was created, and for a week I saw long lines of housewives waiting at the kerosene wagons, each armed with a pail to lay in a copious supply.

So commonplace does the use of the word "crisis" become that when I asked a stenographer in a Samarkand newspaper office where I could buy typewriter paper, she answered: "You can't; there's a crisis in typewriter paper." It seemed an overemphatic word to apply to so small an item, especially as I found that only one favored style and size of paper was exhausted, and that plenty of other kinds would do. But all of Central Asia, like all of Russia, thinks in terms of crises.

"It will be many years before these crises are over," I heard a speaker say to an audience of university students. "For years still we will have the cotton lines, the rubber lines, the airplane lines—all waiting their turn. No matter how fast our pro-

duction increases, and it is increasing each year rapidly—we learn to want things even faster."

The radio introduces everywhere new wishes and new needs, and perhaps nowhere in the world has radio quite such an effect of modern miracle as in these irrigated lands across which once swept Genghis Khan and Tamerlane and earlier still, the Macedonian Alexander. When radio first "talked" in the Uzbek villages, it was very black magic. Then, when the peasants grew used to it, radio became the most popular of institutions.

"Two and a half years ago," said Mr. Schneider, manager of the Tashkent Radio Station, who got his experience in Paris, "there were only five radio receivers in the whole Tashkent district, and these had been bought by workers' clubs to listen to concerts from Moscow. Then the Tashkent sending station was established, and later stations in Samarkand and Ashkhabad. Radio receivers spread rapidly, especially when programs were introduced in the native languages, Uzbek, Tadjik and Kirghiz, as well as Russian.

"To-day traveling a hundred miles from the railway you may suddenly see an antennæ. You think

a Russian has installed radio to comfort his homesickness. Not at all. It may be the village club of Uzbeks, or even the nomad *yurt* of the Kirghiz. In these far off places, radios are seldom owned by individuals, for the local folk do not know how to install them, and the cost of sending experts so far from the railway is too high to be borne by individuals. The radios are chiefly in village clubs and libraries, or the little new theaters where the traveling movies show."

One night I visited the Tashkent radio station. The program began at six o'clock with a "radio calendar" in the Uzbek language, announcing the date, the hour, the weather and the day's news. These announcements were heard in villages not to be reached by newspapers for many days or even weeks. The radio goes to spots which have no clocks or, at best, a single unreliable one; it has introduced "time" to the heart of Asia.

Then came a talk on "Travels in the Soviet Republic," part of a serial travelogue which acquaints the Uzbeks with the wonders of their own Soviet Union. It was followed by a concert of Uzbek music, the wailing tones of the strings monotonous

enough to Europeans but dearly loved by the native population. Letters often come to the station protesting against European music. When it is given the Uzbeks declare "it hurts the ears." Their own delights them. After the Uzbek songs came a repetition of the radio calendar in Kirghiz, and then more music by artists from the Caucasus.

There are no advertisements, for the radio is government-owned, its programs being devised by the Department of Education. On other evenings of my stay there were talks on "The Economic Development of Central Asia," on history, physics and chemistry. The programs chosen were in large part by request, for the auditors send in their preferences constantly. "You must realize," said the director, "that 90 percent of the people in this region don't know a single thing about any modern science and some of them are very hungry for knowledge. The Department of Education considers radio one of the most important of our schools."

At eight o'clock the peasantry begins to go to bed in the distant villages, and the hour arrives to end the Uzbek and start the Russian program. Russians have more lamps than the natives and keep later

hours. Their program is similar: a calendar, a concert, a lecture on local Natural History, followed perhaps by lessons in the Uzbek language, for those Russians who are making their careers there. On the night of my visit, however, the program was of lighter stuff.

"It is Thursday night," said Mr. Schneider, "the evening before the Friday holiday of this Mohammedan region. To-night we give only dance music for the clubs." The dance tunes were not intended for the workers' clubs of Tashkent, which have their own artists. But scattered across Central Asia are lonely groups of Russians, peasant colonists, workers on the railroad, workers on the big farms of the Cotton Trust and at its scientific stations, engineering staffs and Russian laborers on irrigation projects like Revat Hodja, frontier posts on the borders of Afghanistan and China. In all these places Thursday night is dance night in the young folks' clubs.

If a dance night seems frivolous for pioneers conducting a revolution and building an empire, be it noted that the program lasted only two hours, till ten o'clock. Neither the fox trot nor the shimmy nor the Charleston were given; the Board of Edu-

*Radio Comes to the New Generation*

cation does not approve of them. But the evening was full of variety; a valse, a polka, a Spanish step, a *pas de quatre*, a Polish dance, a Russian folk-tune. The conductor of the orchestra could not give me the name of the composer of his valses; some one had copied the notes from an old book and passed them around in manuscript. Such is immortality in radio days; the musician's name forgotten, but his music living in the feet of dancing youth across a thousand miles of mountains and prairies.

The radio station serves as "little father" to folk in distant villages who do not know to whom to turn for aid in the "big town." Letters come full of personal problems. A village woman sent the following communication; she could not write it herself but she had begged a traveling representative of the Women's Section of the Party to set it down for her.

"Since I unveiled, my husband beats me mercilessly," she said. "Please announce this fact with his name and the name of our village, so that he may be shamed before the neighbors in our village club where we have a loud speaker." To the woman herself there seemed nothing incongruous in her request which was promptly complied with. But it is hard

to imagine a land modern enough to have loud speakers and yet so backward that a husband beats his wife for unveiling.

Another letter from a disappointed suitor described how he had asked for the hand of a village maiden but her father had sold her to an old man who paid a good *kalym* for her. The young man complained to the village Soviet about the sale of the girl, but got no action. So now he appealed to the radio station, to announce his grievance, and the lawbreaking practiced in his village.

"We are supposed to be a clearing house for everything," said Mr. Schneider. "What connection have these distant places with government? They have their village Soviet president, who may be drunk, illiterate and dishonest. Perhaps they appeal to the volost authority and find it corrupt. Somewhere higher up they believe there may be justice. They do not know whom to appeal to. So they write to the radio station."

From a village high in the Pamirs, shut in by snow all winter, a special messenger comes to Tashkent. He has watched his chances for good weather to pass the snow peaks, and now he cannot return

till spring. He says: "On such a day, we open in our village a new club with a loud speaker. Will you not, for it will make us glad, speak congratulations to us over the radio?" On the appointed day, half the excitement of the club opening is the thrill of hearing about themselves from the Tashkent Radio Station.

Another of the modern miracles in Central Asia is the work of the Health Departments. In 1924, the first "Health Expeditions" began to penetrate into dark regions that had never seen a doctor. A woman physician of my acquaintance went on one of these expeditions, a three thousand mile zigzag by camels across the Kirghiz steppe. At every stopping place she was thronged by patients, to whom she could only administer a brief first aid. When she was forced to proceed further the women would beg her: "Tell us this word that you use." To them all medicine was magic and they were disconsolate when she failed to give them the potent muttered charm.

Eight such health expeditions passed through the great plains of Asia making brief health surveys of unknown regions and arousing the populations to the need for modern methods. They have been fol-

lowed by the local hospital station and regional doctors. In 1928, the Uzbek Republic spent 13,458,000 roubles for its public health work; there were 3,979 beds in its hospitals. Before the war there had been hospitals only in the Russian cities serving the Russian population, a total of 339 beds. The twelvefold growth in hospital facilities has been accompanied by no relaxation of standards; the new Hospital of the Republic in Samarkand, costing $600,000, is brilliantly modern with white floors tiled or of composition, and walls in restful shades of cream or tan or gray. In its octagonal operating rooms light comes plentifully from three sides, but chiefly from the north. In its many buildings are sections for surgical cases, ear and eye, gynecological, internal diseases, nervous diseases, children's diseases. Yet this splendidly modern institution is located in a city which has no sewer system; it must itself maintain great chemical pits for cleaning 50,000 pails of water daily, before discharging them into the Zeruvshan.

The Institute of Tropical Medicine, established in 1924, in Bokhara, carried on in one typical year the fight against malaria in 476 points of popula-

tion. It has drained the city of Bokhara and stamped out the disease within its walls. Nine dispensaries for tuberculosis and ten for venereal diseases, and twenty-one "Houses of Sanitary Teaching," with exhibitions and lectures, are only part of the new network that has grown up since the Revolution. The work for motherhood and infancy was barely begun in 1924, for it was hard to get Uzbek women to leave the doors of their homes; by 1928, there were fifty-six "consultations" [1] and thirty-two day-nurseries with 920 beds. Besides these permanent institutions, eighteen temporary day nurseries were opened in the country districts during the cotton-picking season.

In the native city of Tashkent I followed one of the women sanitary inspectors in her task of supervising the food supply of restaurants and bakeries. In the jumbled filth of those old bazaars it seemed incredible to think of health laws; but she had enforced the ruling that new baked bread must be wrapped in a clean sheet and not in a dirty coat. Another woman on the same staff went from house to house telling the women how to handle the family

[1] See description in "The Homes of the Uzbeks."

water supply and guard against diseases; at first the Uzbek women were afraid of her, but as soon as they learned that she collected no taxes, they began to hail her visits. A government which gave free medical advice and when necessary the medicine itself was to them a miracle. Even greater, however, was the social miracle achieved when one of the villages near Tashkent passed an ordinance, prohibiting the common tea bowl in the *Chai-Khannas*—that symbol of fellowship which has circulated from mouth to mouth through the ages, carrying hospitality and infection together. When native Uzbeks in even one village can abolish this by vote, the social revolution has begun in Central Asia.

All of this modernization is consciously directed by the communist party through channels of government, trade-unions and social organizations. But the real god of the new régime is not the radio or the cinema or the Health Department, but the factory. And the factory's consort, the railroad. These are the Jupiter and Juno of the Soviet Olympus. Factory managers grow lyric over them; factory workers write songs to them. We of the West have long forgotten how romantic are these creations of modern

industry. The struggle between owners and workers has marred for us the marvel of the machine.

The Soviet view of the factory, inculcated in the youth, is illustrated by a story in a school reader. According to this tale, a boy is reading a newspaper to his illiterate peasant father, and comes to the words "a collective." He asks the father what it means, but the old peasant cannot explain. Next day the boy asks his teacher, who bids him wait till after school. She takes him into the school garden, explaining: "You see, my boy, how every one does some of the work. Some draw water; others dig weeds; others prune trees or run ditches. If one man did all this work, it would take a month of long and lonely days. But when we all do it together, we accomplish it swiftly while having a pleasant time.

"This, my boy, is a collective, a school garden collective. But—a factory is also a collective. When men make goods by hand in primitive ways, they require much time and exertion; they work in loneliness without the cultural influence of society. But when they join together in a factory, they can have big machines which no one could buy for himself or use if he had them. With these machines, all work-

ing together, they can produce more goods for the world, while having a social time and the chance for culture."

This glamorous view of the factory is held not merely by school textbooks. The young factory manager in the silk filature mills of Old Bokhara, the first factory ever to be opened in this ancient holy city, saw in his plant no mere mechanism for producing silk, but civilization itself descending on Old Bokhara. He looked tired and wan with the continuous cares of his labor, but his eyes shone as he described his achievements and plans. Very little he said of production and not a word of profits until I asked him. He spoke of the freeing of women through factory labor, and of the plans which made of this first silk filature mills a tool to awaken and industrialize a backward population.

The establishment of a silk mill instead of some other industry was dictated by the political reason that a silk mill would serve as lever to pry women out of Moslem homes into civic life. Announcement was made of the need for workers in as many villages as possible, "so that all might know the cultural effects of factory life." The first women

applying for jobs were told "veiled women cannot work in factories," and at this the veils began to come off even in the distant villages.

These women were so backward that they shrieked with terror when electric lights first came on in the streets of Bokhara. (Incidentally, the opening of the street lighting system was also done with appropriate ceremonies and propaganda.) The women were given work in a well-lighted, modern building, eight hours a day on the day shift, seven and a half on the evening shift, five and a half on the midnight shift. On their wages, 34 roubles a month as learners, the factory was confessedly losing money, though it hoped to make this up by the end of the year. The factory maintained a day nursery, workers' dwellings of modern type, a cinema, classes for learning to read and write in Uzbek and Tadjik. It was functioning not merely as a producing plant, but as a school for citizenship, and especially as a propaganda station shouting aloud the benefits of modern industry, as brought by the Bolsheviks. One entertaining result of this propaganda was that the illiterate women workers, even before they had learned to read, were asking in their shop meetings

why they were confined to manual labor, instead of taking part in management!

In the new silk mills of the Fergana region, the girls have written a song about the factory. There is no single author; it has arisen by the adding of verse to verse. In the first stanza, the "kerchief" is symbolical of the Russian headdress, replacing the confining black *paranja* of the Uzbeks; the red kerchief is the badge of enthusiastic trade unionists and young communists, while the silk kerchief is a reference to the fact that young factory girls will often spend their savings lavishly in order to buy a very fine new kerchief—as a symbol of their new freedom. The song itself was sung to me in Uzbek, and translated by a music teacher into Russian, from which I put it into English very roughly:

"When I took the road to the factory,
I found there a kerchief,
A silk kerchief,
A red kerchief;
Let no one say I bought it with roubles.
I bought it with my own labor,
With my own hand's labor.

"When I go home,
The roar of the factory is in me;

It gives me rhythm,
It gives me energy;
What am I doing here at home?

"At the blowing of the second whistle,
If I am sitting by the waters
Or before the mountains,
None the less I will leap up!
I shall be found at my post of duty
At the blowing of the second whistle."

A thousand miles to the south of Soviet Central Asia, across the Hindu Kush and Himalayas, Ghandi the saint teaches the Indian people to reject the modern factory as the destroyer of the soul. The West has tried to answer him by mentioning increased production. Perhaps it remains for Soviet Central Asia to give an answer more likely to appeal to the Asian peoples—to celebrate the factory not for its material goods alone, but as the bringer of sociability and freedom. To one who has seen the ruthless exploitation which accompanies the factory into China and into the other nations of Asia where European and American capital exploit backward peoples, the factories of Soviet Turkestan seem worthy of the lyric enthusiasm poured out upon them by managers and workers alike. Even if they should

fail as economic institutions, they may have been worth their cost as political unifiers of backward peoples and as agencies for civic education.

The question whether these factories pay is a matter of bookkeeping. Any state factory, unless shockingly mismanaged, can be made to pay by putting up the price of its output and protecting it from competition. Such is the policy to-day in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile a struggle goes on to reduce prices by efficient management and to prove that it is good business to equip plants from the beginning for the education and civic awakening of their workers. But in the economic life of Soviet Central Asia, chances of failure are often taken when the political end warrants it.

Two years ago the Uzbek State Trading Company was given orders to capture the trade of the Pamirs. This high "roof of the world," strategically located where India, Afghanistan, and China meet the farthest southern corner of the Soviet Republic, was politically under the Red Star of the north, but economically dominated by the cheap goods from India. "Lose a million if you must, but get the 'Pamirs,'" said the political authorities of Soviet

Central Asia to the Uzbek State Trading Company. At last accounts they claimed to have "got them"; their network of coöperative stores, supplied from wholesale distributing centers in Tashkent, had ousted the individual Indian or British trading companies. There had been, it was found, no economic loss to the Uzbek State Trading Company. How much political interference there was by the customs officials on the frontier is unreported.

In the ancient city of Samarkand there is a workers' club named after Tomsky, the president of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Soviet Republic. Here in a narrow, badly ventilated hall I attended the third annual congress of the Agricultural Coöperatives of the Uzbeks. In two years' time the membership had more than doubled. Seventy-three percent of all the families in Uzbekistan belonged to this mighty organization; its annual turnover (counting all coöperatives together) had reached four hundred million roubles, or nearly one hundred roubles per inhabitant.

The illiterate Uzbek who raises caracul skins for the New York market, receives through his coöperative all the profits made. Five or six months before

the skin is produced he gets half its estimated worth on credit, a loan for which he pays no interest. When he delivers the skins he is paid the rest of a basic price fixed by the Department of Foreign Trade of the Soviet Union. But he gets also a ticket from the coöperative, entitling him to share in the later profits when they are received from New York. The Department of Foreign Trade charges a commission of one percent for handling, and remits the rest to the Peasant Coöperatives of Uzbekistan. They in turn are allowed to receive seven and a half percent for the cost of overhead, to cover the curing and sorting of skins and the interest on the advance they have made to the peasants. The rest of the profits goes back each year to the individual producer; the coöperative does not even retain any capital to finance the next year's purchase. Funds for this come each year from state owned banks of Moscow, and are advanced to the coöperatives on their contracts with their members.

This organization, brought into being during the past four years, forms the backward illiterate Uzbek peasant into an economic collective, to deal with the mighty markets of New York. A district manager

from the Bokhara region, told me with much enthusiasm that the Central Asians appreciate the benefits of coöperatives much more than Russian peasants do and are organized much more easily. The management is elected by the members. According to figures given at the meeting, of the 2,102 members of the boards of management, 1,000 were classed as "poor peasants," 1,041 as "middle peasants," and 61 as "intellectuals." Only about one-fourth were members of the Communist Party, but all the rest belonged to the Plowman's Association, the organization of toiling peasants.

Thus political and economic forces work together to develop Soviet influence along the borders of China and India. The Russia of the czar held control of Russian Turkestan by armies at the end of a long railway from Moscow. The Soviet Republic is shrewder. It is building another railroad from Tashkent north to Siberia, at a cost of a hundred million dollars, that the peoples of Central Asia may be connected, not only with the political capital of Moscow, but with the great grain empire to the east. Five hundred kilometers of this line are already in operation; two years hence when the whole railroad

is completed, the timber and grain of Siberia will pour south to the treeless and breadless regions of Turkestan in exchange for fruits and cotton. The Soviet federation will be basically knit together by economic inter-dependence.

During my visit to Tashkent the *Pravda Vostoka* ran a headline across seven columns: "You Won't Know Central Asia in Five Years." It was a discussion of the famous "Five Year Plan." There followed, with a map, the plans for new construction, new factories, new railroads, and the date when they would be begun and completed. When the railway to Siberia is finished, its working force is to be turned to another major line, from Chardjui via Khiva to European Russia, a distance of 1,800 kilometers opening untouched regions. Short railway lines increase from year to year into the cotton fields; another important line is steadily advancing along the northern border of Afghanistan from Termes to Duschambe.

This is the Central Asian part of the "Five Year Plan" for the whole Soviet Union, an attempt to budget resources and make economic plans for five years ahead. It has been preceded by a year to year

planning for organized progress in the Soviet Union. Foreigners may smile skeptically at these forecasts, but they are the results of surveys and estimates made by a large corps of experts, based upon definite resources of taxation and backed by an organized will. They may not be accomplished in all their details, but they are not idle dreams.

The share of Central Asia in the five year plan of the Soviet Union is reckoned at the great sum of 817 million roubles; which indicates the importance attached to this backward region as producer of cotton and outpost of empire. Only a small part of this sum can be raised by local taxation; the rest will be subsidy from Moscow, "to equalize the backward regions with the center." There is assigned to agricultural improvement 216 million roubles, to irrigation 95 million, to new industries 185 million, for electrification 28 million, for housing 108 million, for municipal utilities 55 million. It is expected during five years to double the value of the manufactured products of Central Asia, which are now worth 426 million roubles. The capital investments authorized are chiefly in cotton and the heavy industries of coal and metal.

All this economic planning is carried on by the Economic Council of Central Asia,[2] a government body. All of it is consciously directed towards the building of socialism. State-owned factories exchanging their wares with organized peasants through coöperatives is the ideal they strive for. This combination grows increasingly powerful. Private merchants of Kokand complained to me that their business grows smaller each year from the "unfair competition" of the coöperatives, which get special freight rates on the railways, special discounts from the state factories, special supplies of goods in time of shortage. They claim that they could beat the coöperatives if allowed the same conditions. But the Soviet Government does not intend to allow the same conditions for private and public trade; it intends that the former shall wane and the latter shall flourish, and that an unbreakable combination of public agencies shall serve the needs of the people. The accepted ideal of the capitalist nations that free competition is good is replaced by a different ideal, that collective planning is good.

To go from camels to airplanes at once is a tremendous strain. It creates both the romance and

[2] See chapter: "The Cotton Empire."

the problem of Central Asia. It creates long waiting lists for air traffic, long waiting lines for every kind of goods. It creates a hundred new desires which cannot soon be satisfied. But if discontent arises, enthusiasm also arises, and energy and belief in the future. These stormy qualities have been thrust into the heart of that ancient continent, whose old men once sat in the *Chai-Khannas*, smoking, sipping, watching the changeless centuries roll by them. They still squat sipping tea along the banks of the Syr Darya River, and along the yellow floods of Zeruvshan which water Samarkand. But no more are the centuries changeless. No more does conquest come by the camel routes of the East. The Red Star of the West is symbol of airplanes and factories in the city where once ruled Tamerlane.

# Soviet Influence in Central Asia

*RED STAR IN SAMARKAND, by Anna Louise Strong. Illustrated. 329 pp. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc.* $3.50.

IT is only with great reluctance that the Soviet Government permits foreigners, unless they are traveling on some special economic mission sanctioned by it, to visit its possessions in Central Asia which formerly were known under the modest name of Turkestan and which now, like the rest of Russia, are subdivided, at least on paper, into a series of "independent and autonomous republics." So great, indeed, is this reluctance that, according to Mrs. Anna Louise Strong, the author of the book under review, not a single foreign press correspondent has been allowed to enter that country in the course of the last five years. This is not astonishing. As Mrs. Strong justly points out, Turkestan is the "outpost of Bolshevik propaganda and influence" in the Orient and "an experiment station in communizing Central Asians" from which numerous Red threads wind on to Afghanistan and Mongolia, to India and Persia; and it is but natural that a government which never tires in assuring the world that it it. Hence, if, during these past years, most of the blood shed by the revolution has dried up in Russia, it often continues to flow in Turkestan. To this day anti-Soviet revolts are frequent there; as recently as in April of 1929 Soviet papers reported an important rising of the "basmachi" (rebel bandits) which, to be suppressed, had required the massing of considerable Red forces. The price at which the "victories of socialism" are purchased in this country is, naturally, one more reason for keeping the foreign eyes away from it.

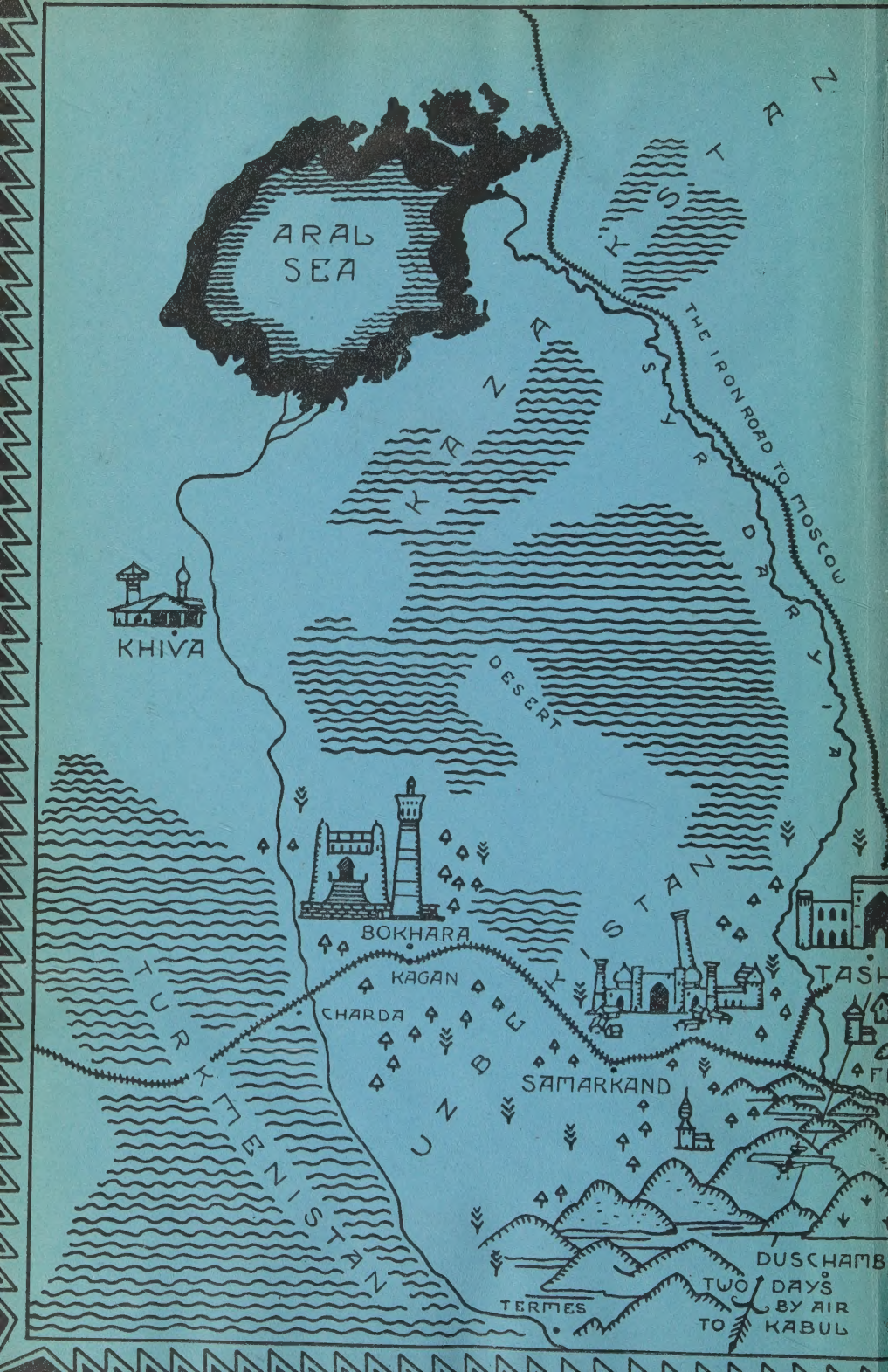
But the Soviet Government made an exception of Mrs. Strong; she was admitted to Red Central Asia. And it is in this that the obvious interest of her book lies. "Red Star in Samarkand" is, unless the present reviewer is mistaken, the first detailed description of the Turkestan of today by a non-Russian eyewitness. Mrs. Strong writes lightly and pleasantly; one is not bored by her narrative even when she speaks of such dry matters as the cotton industry of the country, its irrigation system, its economics, &c.

The Soviet Government certainly will not regret having allowed Mrs. Strong to visit Turkestan: even if ress" into a land of barbarism; to these "impatient souls," to these daring "reformers," she often devotes almost poetic lines. The Mohammedan "mullahs" (priests) and, generally speaking, all those who oppose communism in Turkestan invariably emerge from her narrative as savage brutes, scoundrels and selfish oppressors of the masses. Mrs. Strong often speaks of the assassinations of Communists, "the martyrs" of progress, by the Asiatics, who are so obstinate in their reluctance to become civilized Leninists; but she apparently has not heard anything of the lavish executions by which both the guilty and the innocent ones are punished for these assassinations — executions which often are not dissimulated even by the Soviet press. The Soviet régime, generally speaking, arises from her book as a touchingly humanitarian Sunday school régime.

If, however, Mrs. Strong's attitude is rather one-sided, the facts she quotes are often very interesting. One may not accept her ideas, but one follows with interest the picture of the baffling cultural chaos in which the Turkestan of today is plunged, and which, in some

difficult. Two things the government undertook to do in the interest of its women subjects—to abolish the *kalym,* or purchase price of girls in marriage, and to free women from the *paranja,* or veil. As to the first, the law handed down from Moscow was constantly evaded, and gave rise to many complicated trials, for the "assistant judges" (who are the jury in Russian court procedure) naturally saw nothing wrong in the ancient custom, and were opposed to sumptuary legislation. In the matter of the veil, it was necessary for women themselves to take the initiative. The Women's Section of the Communist party managed the campaign. Through pressure by the government, its employees were led to permit their wives to unveil. Trade unions followed. Physicians declared the veil a menace to health. A few pioneers offered themselves as martyrs. Public opinion was against them, as it was against the protagonists of dress reform and suffrage in the West, and husbands, brothers and mobs put them to death. The authorities brought the murderers into court, and secured convictions and extreme penalties. In this connection Miss Strong comments on the device of the Soviet government of using trials for education, and staging court scenes for propaganda. In the end, in spite of the opposition of the religious leaders, public opinion wavered and broke. The great triumph of woman in Asia came at the mass unveiling of the women of Bokhara, the very center of Mohammedan influence, in March, 1928.

Altogether, Miss Strong's book has an interest and fascination which the innumerable accounts of the Russia written from Moscow or the Volga often lack. In her pages the hard outlines of a mechanical and material civilization are softened by the atmosphere of the ancient summer of the world. And the importance of her testimony, granting that it is colored by her historical imagination and personal sympathy, is beyond question. The Soviets have driven a wedge of Socialism into the heart of the greatest continent. In view of the results, political, economic and moral, it is not rash to guess that the success of the Communist experiment will be determined, not on the frontiers of Poland, still less in London or Washington, but on the steppes of Turkestan.


ARAL SEA
KAZAKSTAN
THE IRON ROAD TO MOSCOW
SYR DARYIA
KHIVA
DESERT
BOKHARA
KAGAN
CHARDA
UZBEKISTAN
SAMARKAND
TURKMENISTAN
TASH
DUSCHAMB
TWO DAYS BY AIR TO KABUL
TERMES

MOSCOW
SIBERIA
RUSSIA
SAMARA
ORENBURG
MONGOLIA
TURKEY
BOKHARA
TASHKENT
SAMARKAND
CHINA
PERSIA
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